

Boxers and their Battles //

Anecdotal Sketches and Personal Recollections
of Famous Pugilists

Willmott-Dixon, Willmott //

BY

"THORMANBY"

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[Pseud. of Willmott Willmott-Dixon]

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TOM SAYERS.

Frontispiece.

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Boxers and Their Battles

I

INTRODUCTORY

"LET no one," says George Borrow in *The Romany Rye*, "sneer at the bruisers of England. What were the gladiators of Rome or the bull-fighters of Spain in its palmiest days compared to England's bruisers? Some of them have been as noble, kindly men as the world ever produced. Can the rolls of the English aristocracy exhibit names belonging to more noble, more heroic men than those who were called respectively Pearce, Cribb and Spring?"

George Borrow, whom I had the honour of knowing personally, was given to bursts of rhapsodical eloquence, and I think he

overrated the heroic virtues of "the people opprobriously called prize-fighters." But if so, others have underrated the good qualities of the British boxer, and most unjustly branded him as a ruffian and a brute. There must have been some redeeming points about the Prize Ring and its professors to have enlisted the sympathies of statesmen like the Right Honourable William Windham, Lord Althorp, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Palmerston; men of letters like William Hazlitt, "Christopher North," George Borrow, William Makepeace Thackeray, Lord Houghton, Charles Kingsley, Frederick Locker-Lampson and Tom Hughes; and sportsmen of the type of Assheton Smith, Sir Tatton Sykes, George Payne and George Osbaldeston. That there is much that is dark and degrading in the later annals of British Boxing I do not deny. But even in its worst days there was much that was manly and sportsmanlike among its most notable exponents. And it is not too much to say that some of the finest qualities in the English character—courage, chivalry,

patience, endurance, self-denial, loyalty, have been splendidly illustrated in the History of the Prize Ring.

How deeply rooted the love of pugilism is in the national heart is proved by the remarkable resuscitation of Boxing as a popular sport during the last fifteen years. To Thackeray, writing forty years ago, the Prize Ring seemed almost as extinct as the dodo. And I well remember, when Owen Swift died in 1879, a leading evening newspaper took *Baily's Magazine* severely to task for polluting its pages with an obituary notice of a "ruffianly blackguardly prize-fighter." But we have changed all that, and the British boxer, under a different aspect and altered conditions indeed, but still retaining many of his old features, has come back to stay.

How firm a grip the Prize Ring must have had upon the national taste is evidenced by the phrases which it has left embedded in the language. To "throw up the sponge," to "come up smiling," to "come to the scratch," to "hit out straight from the shoulder,"

"judicious bottle-bolder," "ugly customer," and the like are fragments of the pugilistic *argot* which have become part and parcel of our common speech.

But I need spend no more time in an apology for the British Boxer, let me proceed to introduce him to the reader, and allow his deeds to speak for themselves.

It is not my purpose to give a connected history of the Prize Ring—that would demand a far larger and more ambitious work, comprising pictures of manners in all classes of society during the last 170 years—records of the changes and fluctuations in popular taste—and references to the lives and characters of the patrons as well as the professors of pugilism. In these pages I shall confine myself to anecdotal sketches of a few of the more famous pugilists and their battles. The reader will, no doubt, find some names missing which he may think ought to have been included. But I do not profess to give all the celebrities of the Cestus, and I have been governed in my selection simply by a wish to supply variety

and embody my own personal recollections of prize-fighters I have known. Moreover, should this volume meet with public favour, I might be encouraged to publish a Second Series of "Boxers and Their Battles," which would include some celebrated old names omitted here, and bring the history of British Boxing up to its very latest development.

In no instance are these sketches mere compilations from existing works on pugilism. They are mainly founded upon independent research and the personal narratives of men whose brains and memories I have been permitted to loot.

"All fights are good reading," says Mr George Saintsbury in his *Essays in English Literature*, and I hope those I have collected here will be found no exception to the rule.

II

JEM BELCHER

It is the fashion nowadays to run down the past and its heroes. The bumptious youngsters of the present day think that they know far more than their grandfathers did, and scoff at the prowess of their ancestors. Thereby they only expose their own ignorance and conceit. For it is just as silly to declare that the mighty men of yore were grossly overrated; as it is to assert that they were a hundred times better than the champions of to-day. I am not given to praising the past at the expense of the present. All I maintain is that the best men of days gone by were at least as good as the best men of to-day. Now, take the example of Jem Belcher. I am old enough



JEM BELCHER.

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to remember the time when Jem's name was always mentioned with bated breath as the greatest prize-fighter that ever lived. I have heard his battles described by veterans who saw him at his best, and my subsequent studies and experience have not altered my early conviction that he was the most extraordinary fighter the Prize Ring has ever seen.

Look at his record. He came up to London from Bristol, a stripling of seventeen, and before he was twenty-one he was Champion of England, having beaten the best and biggest men that could be found to face him. Britton, Paddington Jones, Joe Berks, Jack Bartholomew, Andrew Gamble, and Firby (the Young Ruffian), were all tried men who had won their spurs in the Prize Ring. Most of them were skilful and successful boxers. All of them were far superior in physique to young Belcher. Yet this slim lad from Bristol, who scorned all the scientific systems then in vogue, and trusted to his own natural style, thrashed every one of them in the most hollow fashion.

But just as Belcher was at the zenith of his fame he met with a terrible accident which seemed to have abruptly closed his career as a prize-fighter. When playing racquets with a Mr Stewart, a well-known amateur, Jem was struck full in the left eye by a racquet ball, which completely destroyed the sight of the eye; in fact, smashed the ball of the eye to pieces. Thus fatally handicapped, poor Jem felt that all hope of holding the championship was gone, and that the trophy which he had so brilliantly won must be resigned. But, though incapacitated from defending the belt himself, Jem was resolved that it should not pass to anyone but a Bristolian. So he sent for his old pal, "Hen." Pearce, the Game Chicken, to come up and take his place as holder of the proud title of Champion of England.

Pearce was up to that time utterly unknown to the London Fancy, but Belcher trotted him out before the leading amateurs, who were so delighted with his glove performance that they urged Belcher to lose no time in entering his *protégé* for the real

thing. One night, when he was comfortably in bed asleep, Pearce was roused from his slumbers and bidden to dress at once, as some swells had backed him to fight Joe Berks then and there. The Chicken obeyed the call, and at midnight, by candlelight, in a room at Will Warr's, the One Tun, in Jermyn Street, "Hen." Pearce stripped to do battle with his formidable foe. Berks was a Shropshire man, a butcher by trade, and had fought four desperate combats with Jem Belcher. It is true that he was three times beaten, the fourth being a draw; but he had given the invincible Jem a lot of trouble to lick him, and was considered to be, next to Belcher, the best bruiser in England, and the man to whom the title of champion must go by right if Belcher resigned it.

Berks made very light of Pearce's pretensions, spoke of him as "a thread-paper fighter," and backed himself to lick "this boy of Belcher's" inside a quarter of an hour. But he very soon found that he had caught a Tartar in this athletic young Bristolian. The Chicken gave him a fearful hiding, and

so terrific was the force of his blows that the white waistcoats of several of the gentlemen present were crimsoned with the blood which flew in showers from Joe's lacerated face.

Berks was certainly not sober at the time, and believing that if trained and in proper condition for fighting he could thrash this young upstart, he challenged the Chicken to a regular ring fight. They fought for 100 guineas a-side on Putney Common, January 23, 1804, and Berks was most decisively beaten in seventy-seven minutes. In quick succession Pearce thrashed Elias Spray, or Spree, the coppersmith, and the herculean Stephen Carte. Then came his great battle with John Gully.

After his victory over Gully on October 8, 1805, Pearce formally claimed the championship, and challenged any man in the world to fight him for the belt and title. A reply to that challenge came from a most unexpected quarter. To the intense astonishment of the sporting world, Jem Belcher came forward to take up the glove, and called upon his old pupil to fight him for the

championship and a stake of 500 guineas a side.

It is not pleasant to have to pass a harsh criticism on a brave man. But Belcher's conduct in this matter was certainly not creditable to him. After bringing the Chicken out and helping him up the ladder of fame, Jem suddenly turned jealous — meanly and contemptibly jealous — of the man who had fought his way so brilliantly from obscurity to renown. In vain Pearce tried to reason with his old benefactor. Jem rounded on him fiercely, and said that if he refused to fight he would brand him as a coward and call upon him publicly to resign the title which he was afraid to defend. What could the Chicken do after such an insult but reluctantly consent to fight the man who had till now been his firm and true friend, and whom he had loved like a brother?

Now it must be remembered that up to this time Jem Belcher had never known defeat, and his superiority over all his rivals had been so supreme that even good judges might well be excused for believing that it would

take more than the loss of an eye to bar him from the chance of winning even against so good a man as the Chicken. After all Jem was the younger man of the two by four years, though you would not have thought so had you seen them together, for Pearce was the picture of health and manly vigour, whilst late hours and hard drinking had made severe inroads upon Jem's constitution, and given him a pale, unhealthy complexion. However, Mr Fletcher Reid, one of the foremost sportsmen of the day, was ready with 500 guineas to plank down for Belcher, and there were many others who would not believe it possible that the Napoleon of the Prize Ring could be beaten. Captain Halliday and Colonel Mellish found the Chicken his battle money, and it was in the ancestral park of the latter, at Blythe, some ten miles from Doncaster, that the great fight came off.

Friday, December 6, 1805, was the day appointed. Pearce had been staying with his father at the Blue Bell, on Barnley Moor, about a mile from Colonel Mellish's place, and at eleven o'clock on that morning the pair of

them walked quietly across the park to Blythe, where Mellish, the prince of plungers, and the most reckless gambler of his time, was entertaining a large party of guests. Belcher was driven over by Mr Fletcher Reid in a coach and four from Doncaster, and arrived on the scene about noon.

It was noted by old stagers that Bill Gibbons, the best second of his day and one of the quaintest characters ever seen in the ring, had on this occasion deserted his old friend and principal, Belcher, and transferred his services to the opposite camp. This was considered a bad omen, for the luck of Bill Gibbons was proverbial, and he had seconded Jem in all his previous engagements, every one of them gloriously victorious.

At the first glance it was easy to see that Belcher was not the Belcher of yore. The loss of his left eye was a great disfigurement to his good-looking face, which had lost a great deal of the bold lion-like expression that had formerly distinguished it. He looked thin and weedy too by contrast with the Chicken, whose physique was superb. Belcher's height

was 5ft. 11in., and I think 11st. 10lb. was as much as he ever scaled in any of his fights, for he was not a big man. His figure was lithe, supple, slender, and sinewy, with no great show of muscle anywhere except in the back, where his hitting power came from. His shoulders were well knit, but grace and activity rather than strength were the marked characteristics of his frame.

The Game Chicken stood 5ft. 9½in., and his weight was about 12½st. Few finer-looking men have ever stripped to fight in "the magic circle." "A chest like the Chicken's" passed into a proverbial expression to indicate a more than usually well-developed torso. His limbs were grand—big, round and muscular—and he was as active as he was strong. Well set on his broad shoulders was a shapely head, with one of the most pleasant faces ever seen in the ring. Such a picture of health and strength did the Chicken look that odds of 5 to 4 on him were freely laid as he stepped up to the centre of the ring to face his old friend, now his bitter foe.

The Chicken held out his hand with a smile ;

but Belcher, with glowering looks, refused to take it. He changed his mind, however, and the hands that had so often been grasped in friendship now met in the grip of war.

Both men were very cautious, for each knew the mettle of his adversary. Hundreds of times they had had the gloves on together, and the Chicken owed all his science to the teaching of Belcher. Jem, too, could not help feeling that he had before him an antagonist whom he had himself trained in ring-craft, and to whom he had imparted nearly every wrinkle he knew. But pupils know well that masters always keep *something* up their sleeves in case of accident, and don't give themselves entirely away. The Chicken guessed that Jem had some tricks in reserve which he had not revealed even to his pet pupil and pal. So each, as I have said, was very cautious, not daring to throw the ghost of a chance away. It was intensely interesting and exciting to watch two such masters of the art finessing and manœuvring. It was obvious, however, from the very first moment they began to spar that Jem felt the loss of

his left eye badly. That side of his face and body had no signal tower to flash the approach of the foe—blindness and darkness there instead of the eagle glance that used to forestall every blow of the enemy. Still, the quickness of Jem's movements seemed to puzzle the Chicken, and at last, after many feints, Belcher shot in a beauty with his left over Pearce's guard, which cut a deep gash over his right eye, from which the blood gushed, and did not cease flowing till the end of the fight. It was a severe cut, and almost put the Chicken on a level with his one-eyed adversary so far as sight was concerned. But when the close came the great strength of the Chicken gave him the advantage, and after a stiff tussle, for both were clever West-Country wrestlers, he threw Jem heavily.

In the next round Belcher warmed to his work and fought in something like the old lion-like style of yore. His extraordinary quickness on his legs quite flabbergasted the Chicken, who never knew from what quarter the attack was coming till Jem was in, popping blow after blow over his guard. Pearce in-

deed made some beautiful stops ; but he could not keep the half of Belcher's lightning deliveries out of his face. In the close, however, the Chicken had his revenge and again flung his man with great force.

It was soon evident on what lines the battle was going to be fought out. Belcher hoped to blind his man by repeated hits in the face, Pearce reckoned on shattering Jem's frame by constant heavy falls, and the Chicken's tactics proved the more effective in the long run. Nevertheless, for a good twenty minutes the backers of the Chicken trembled for their money. So quick and sudden were Belcher's assaults, so rapid was his hitting, that it looked as if he would cut the Chicken's face to pieces before long. But it was this cutting power of his knuckles that spoiled Jem's game, for the constant flow of blood prevented Pearce from going blind, and it was on blinding him that Belcher reckoned for victory.

By-and-by Jem's strength began to go, and his efforts flagged. Those tremendous falls had shaken the steel out of him. Then

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Henry Pearce showed what a noble and manly heart he had. Over and over again, towards the close of the fight, when he had Jem fixed on the ropes, and could have hammered him about the face as he pleased, he chivalrously forebore to strike.

"No, Jem, I won't take advantage of thee," he said, "lest I blind thy other eye."

This manly forbearance, however, only stung Belcher to fury; he flew at his foe like a wild cat, and in self-defence the Chicken had to hit him hard. The loss of his eye now seriously affected Jem. Two-thirds of his blows were short, he seemed to lack all his old power of judging distance; but his courage was admirable. He never lost heart, though, as his strength failed, his half-blindness told more than ever upon him, and a blow from the Chicken's right on his good eye still further impaired his eyesight, so that his mistakes in timing his hits became quite ludicrous. Yet, to the amazement of everyone, in the seventeenth round Jem pulled himself together in the most marvellous manner, and by a

supreme and almost superhuman exercise of his failing powers, whirled the Chicken off his feet and sent him to the turf with a tremendous thud. But it was his last dying effort, and it exhausted his energies. In the next round the Chicken planted a terrific blow with the right on the side of the body, which broke two of Belcher's ribs and sent him flying off his feet. That ended the fight, and for the first, but not the last, time in his life the hitherto invincible Jem Belcher tasted the bitterness of defeat. His mortification was keen, but it was not of his own misfortune that he thought most; his acutest grief was for a friend who had lost his all through backing him.

Everyone thought that this lesson would sink deep into Jem's heart, and that he would never be such a fool as to tempt fortune in the roped arena again. He settled down as a publican at the Jolly Brewers, in Wardour Street, and announced his intention to fight no more.

For two years he made no sign of any desire to enter the ring again. Then, to

the amazement of the sporting world, he burst out as a challenger once more. The Game Chicken had retired from the arena, but another West countryman had been slowly but surely rising into fame in the person of Tom Cribb. It was gall and wormwood to Jem Belcher's proud spirit to hear praise lavished on any rival pugilist, and he became so furious at hearing Tom Cribb's prowess eulogised that he forthwith challenged Cribb to fight him for £200 a-side.

The challenge was accepted, though not without some hesitation on the part of Cribb's backers, for there was still a lingering superstitious belief in Jem Belcher's marvellous skill as a fighter, and the general opinion was that Tom was too slow to cope with such a quick, dashing opponent as the ex-Champion. On the other hand, there was the fact that Belcher had lost an eye, and how seriously that handicapped him had been proved in his battle with the Game Chicken. Moreover, as I have already hinted, Jem had been living a rackety life, and late hours and dissipation of all kinds had begun

to tell their tale upon a constitution never over strong.

But so firm was the faith still held in Belcher as a phenomenal genius to whom none of the ordinary rules of life applied, that he was the favourite in the betting up to the very moment he entered the ring. "Cribb is as slow as a top," everyone said; "he won't be able to touch Jem, and he'll be blinded by Belcher's shower of quick and sharp blows in the face." There were a few who thought that Cribb, though slow, was sure, and that his stubborn courage and splendid physique would enable him to take all that Belcher could give him, and then walk into his exhausted opponent with astonishing effect. It must be remembered that up to this time Cribb's record was not particularly brilliant. He had fought five battles, of which he had won four. George Nichols was the man who had licked him—a feat of which George bragged to the end of his days—and to be able to say that he was the only man breathing that had ever thrashed Tom Cribb, Champion of

England, was certainly a thing that anyone might have been excused for boasting of. George Maddox, Tom Blake, and Ikey Pig, whom Cribb had beaten, were not of much account, being all stale and past their prime. But Bill Richmond was a man who improved as he grew older, and was never better than when, at the age of fifty-two, he thrashed the formidable Tom Shelton. Therefore Cribb's triumph over him after a hard fight of ninety minutes was undoubtedly a feather in his cap.

The 8th of April 1807 was the day fixed for the fight, and the place was the far-famed Moulsey Hurst, nearly opposite Hampton Court, the scene of more prize fights than any other spot in the world. It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of battles were fought there, and, until the authorities began to interfere, it was looked upon as a matter of course that Moulsey Hurst would be the fixture for any fight in connection with the London Prize Ring.

And what a sight Moulsey Hurst was on the day a fight was coming off! The road down presented a scene like that to Epsom

on the Derby Day. Every conceivable vehicle—from my lord's spanking coach and four to the coster with his barrow and moke—was seen tearing along the highway amid volleys of chaff and roaring fun. Hundreds of impecunious sportsmen of a humbler but not less enthusiastic order would tramp down over night, and if it were summer time sleep under the hedges; if winter, take shelter in rick yards and outhouses, helping themselves to any unconsidered trifles that might fall in their way. And the Hurst itself presented the appearance of a fair. There were drinking, shooting and gambling booths, itinerant musicians, orange girls and vendors of cake and cocoanuts. The thimble-riggers, too, were always in evidence, and gentlemen would often stop in front of the thimble-rigger's table, dismount, and lose £20 or £30 pounds in a few minutes.

Well, let the reader imagine such a scene as this on that memorable April day, when Tom Cribb and Jem Belcher were to do battle on the classic Hurst. Cribb, oddly enough, had never yet fought on this time-honoured

field of battle, but Belcher had won two of his most brilliant victories there, and when Jem drove over that morning on the box seat of Lord Saye and Sele's drag, in company with his brother Tom, he said to his noble backer, "My lord, Moulsey's always been a lucky place for me, and I feel that I shall win to-day." All the cream of England's aristocratic sportsmen were on the Hurst that day, including H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV.

That Belcher was the popular favourite was evident from the ringing cheers which greeted him as his noble patron drove him up to the ring-side. His face was flushed, and he looked excited, but to all who spoke to him he gave the same assurance that he was bound to win. Cribb had but a small bevy of admirers, and when asked what he thought of his chance said, "You'll see that my head will break his fists to pieces." And certainly anyone who looked at Tom's solid chump must have felt that there was some reason in his confident assertion.

At last the exciting moment came when

both men stood up stripped in the centre of the ring, awaiting the summons from "Gentleman" Jackson, the master of the ceremonies, to begin. The contrast between the combatants was remarkable. Belcher, always slim and light for his height, looked leaner and lighter than ever. At his best, though he stood 5ft. 11in., he never scaled more than 11st. 10lb., and he was 3lbs. short of that weight on the present occasion. The loss of his eye, as I have already noted, robbed his face of the leonine look which had once filled his friends with admiration and struck terror into his foes. His complexion was white and pasty, his arms were thin, and there was no show of muscle about him anywhere. Cribb was an inch shorter, but quite 2st. heavier. For this was before Captain Barclay took him in hand and taught him how to train. His wide shoulders, deep chest, and enormous shoulder blades, together with the huge muscles of his back and arms, indicated tremendous strength. He stood like a tower—the very impersonation of massive might. But he certainly looked

ponderous, and one could believe those who said he was as slow as a top. Still, there was an expression of stubborn British, bulldog courage about his face which suggested that he would take a "devil of a lot of licking" before he gave in.

The word was given in the deep tones of "Gentleman" Jackson's bass voice, "Time." Up went the arms of both, and they scanned one another with piercing glances. Then Belcher began to move round his man. Tom slowly revolved, as if on a pivot, keeping his right well up to guard his face and his left extended to prop Jem if he came in. Quicker and quicker Jem circled round him, then suddenly, when Tom was almost dizzy with turning, Belcher sprang in and landed two sharp cuts on Cribb's face, springing back again before Tom could touch him. But the stolid Thomas did not budge nor flinch, simply resumed his ground steadily, and fixed his eyes on his mercurial foe, whose every action was suggestive of quicksilver. Smack, smack, Belcher's fists were in Cribb's face again before he could raise

his arm to stop them. For it was a peculiarity of Jem's lightning deliveries that you could not tell whether they were coming under or over your guard, consequently you hesitated and were lost. A third time the same thing occurred; but Tom was more alert on this occasion, and, catching Belcher up on the retreat, gave him a heavy punch in the ribs, closed, and threw him.

Belcher's backers looked serious. They had not bargained for falls, and if Cribb were going to play that game Jem's chance looked anything but rosy. Belcher was well aware of this, and lured Tom on to try his hand at wrestling again. The bait took, Cribb rushed after his man to throw him, and then Belcher treated the spectators to some rare sport. He caught Tom a smack under the chin as his head came forward, which sent his noddle back with a jerk, then banged him right and left in the face till the blood ran in streams from Cribb's mouth and nose. Finally, to crown all, Jem had the audacity to close with his ponderous

antagonist, and to the amazement of all and the delight of his friends stretched Cribb full length on the greensward by a dexterous backheel.

Tom came up considerably shaken by the fall, and looking as if he were puzzled what to do. But, stolid and steady as ever, he put himself on the defensive. It was all of no use, however. Jem got over or under his guard just as he pleased, and nailed him with stinging severity on the eyes, nose and mouth. "He'll have Tom blinded before half an hour," said Lord Saye and Sele. But Cribb was not easily blinded. A heavy bar of frontal bone shielded his eyes, just as in the case of Deaf Burke, and, though his eyebrows were badly cut, there was no sign of damage to his vision. But, Lord! how Belcher *did* hammer him! His fists never seemed to be out of Cribb's face, and he appeared to have recovered all his old splendid fighting form. Thrice he threw Cribb; but the effort of throwing a man two stone heavier than himself told upon him, and though it was pretty to see his

clever wrestling tricks, yet his friends felt that it was very risky to waste his strength in throwing Cribb, who did not appear to care the least for his upsets.

The half-hour came and passed, and still Cribb was not blinded, nor was his strength one bit impaired. Blood, indeed, was dripping incessantly from his mouth and nose, and there was a gash over each eyebrow that you could have put your finger in—but he came up as steadily as ever and threw himself into attitude with the same sturdy, dogged air of indifference. Now and then, as the fight went on and Belcher got a bit slower in his movements, Tom had a look in and landed an ugly one on the ribs, which made Belcher squirm; but there was not a mark on Jem's face; so swiftly did he always spring back after delivering his blows that Tom was never quick enough to touch him.

Jem, however, appeared to feel that a desperate effort was necessary to make the fight safe for him, and summoning all his energies, he attacked Cribb with a fury

which almost took away the breath of the spectators. Belcher seemed literally to hurl himself like a stone from a sling at Cribb—leapt at him like a tiger at its prey—drove him here and there and everywhere all over the ring, till, drenched in blood, Tom staggered and fell in his corner apparently utterly done for. The spectators were wound up to a state of electrical excitement by this extraordinary and magnificent display of fighting. They could hardly restrain themselves from rushing into the ring and smacking Belcher on the back in their frenzy of admiration. Twenty to one on Belcher went begging, and “Gentleman” Jackson, seeing that the fight was practically over, and that Belcher’s victory was certain, cried out, “Gentlemen, keep your seats; there will be another fight directly.”

Slowly Cribb came to the scratch; his face was dreadfully cut and his chest was heaving. But he confronted his foe manfully. Jem planted a couple of blows, and then an expression of acute pain was seen to pass over his features. He drew back and cast a rueful

look at his hands. A grim smile flickered across Tom's gory visage. He knew what that look meant. Steadily he advanced upon Jem, who retreated, and seemed afraid to hit. At last he struck out hesitatingly; the blow fell on Tom's right arm; Cribb, pressing on, drove Belcher before him till he got a fair shot at him, and then with a punch in the ribs sent him through the ropes out of the ring. In the next round Jem fainted to get a blow home. His hitting seemed suddenly paralysed, and again Tom punched him down. That was the end. Belcher's hands were useless, he could fight no more. Five minutes later Jem, apparently otherwise unhurt, was walking round the ring showing his knuckles driven up, while the victorious Cribb was saying to his friends, "What did I tell you? I said that my head would break his hands to pieces."

Jem had failed, but had failed gloriously, and had he been content to rest on his laurels, his reputation would not have greatly suffered. But he would not learn

wisdom by experience, and once more, for the last time, he staked fame and fortune on the issue of battle.

Cribb by his hardly-won victory over Bob Gregson for 500 guineas on October 25, 1808, gained the title and position of Champion, for John Gully, the previous holder, had formally retired from the P. R. This was too much for Jem Belcher; he believed that he was a better man than Cribb, and that Tom's triumph over him was a fluke, and to the astonishment and dismay of his friends he challenged Cribb to fight him again for the Championship and a stake of 200 guineas a-side. In vain the best sportsmen in London implored Jem to reconsider his decision. They pointed out to him the folly of risking his money and his reputation in a fight with a man so much stronger and heavier than himself. They told him as delicately yet as plainly as they could that his loss of sight was a fatal bar now to his success. But Jem would not listen to them: his mind was set on fighting Cribb, and nothing could move

him from his obstinate resolve. So they let him rush headlong to his doom.

Captain Barclay, pedestrian and athlete, made famous by his feat of walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours, took Cribb in hand, found him the most of his battle money, and carefully trained him for the event on his own new system, which was the first attempt at really scientific training, as we understand the term. Before Captain Barclay appeared upon the scene training for pugilists was of the rudest description. Fights were not expected to last more than half an hour, and a healthy man's wind was generally good enough to enable him to stand up for that length of time after a moderate amount of exercise and abstention from excesses. But Barclay changed all that, and the first man he tried his system upon was Tom Cribb.

By most judges of the sport the battle was deemed a foregone conclusion for Cribb, and 7 to 4 and 2 to 1 were freely laid upon him as soon as the match was made.

There were still some indeed who had a lingering belief in Belcher, and could not help thinking that with a little luck he ought to thrash such a slow-coach as Cribb. But it was with a rather melancholy interest that most ring-goers looked forward to the fight.

On the day fixed, February 1, 1809, a great crowd assembled on Epsom Downs to witness the battle between the two most celebrated boxers then living.

Belcher, after one long, searching look at his adversary, opened the ball in his old dashing style, springing in on his man and delivering his hits with lightning-like rapidity. Cribb fought steadily on the retreat, with his left extended to prop his opponent as he came in. But steady and cool though Tom was, the hurricane fighting of Belcher confused and bewildered him. Jem's fists flashed to and fro with extraordinary quickness, and despite Cribb's strong guard, he was nailed half a dozen times in the face before he knew where he was. He fell back before this storm of

blows, and apparently made up his mind that it was useless attempting to return them *yet*. The first round was all in Belcher's favour, but that was what everyone expected, and it made no difference in the betting, 2 to 1 on Cribb being freely offered and only shyly taken.

The second round was fought on the same lines to Belcher's advantage. But it was when the tide of fortune seemed to be going dead against him that the sterling qualities of Tom Cribb as a fighter were most finely displayed. He never lost his head, but coolly and steadily retreated, stopping Belcher's furious blows with a precision and skill which called forth loud plaudits from the spectators. Over and over again Jem hurled himself against that stubborn defence as vainly as Napoleon's splendid Cuirassiers dashed themselves against the British infantry squares at Waterloo.

One terrific hit, however, got home, and Cribb was so staggered and dazed that Belcher, seizing his opportunity, rushed

in, closed, and gave Tom a shattering cross-buttock. Jem's friends were frantic with delight, and made the welkin ring with their shouts; but the betting was not affected. Indeed, Captain Barclay confidently laid 4 to 1 on Cribb.

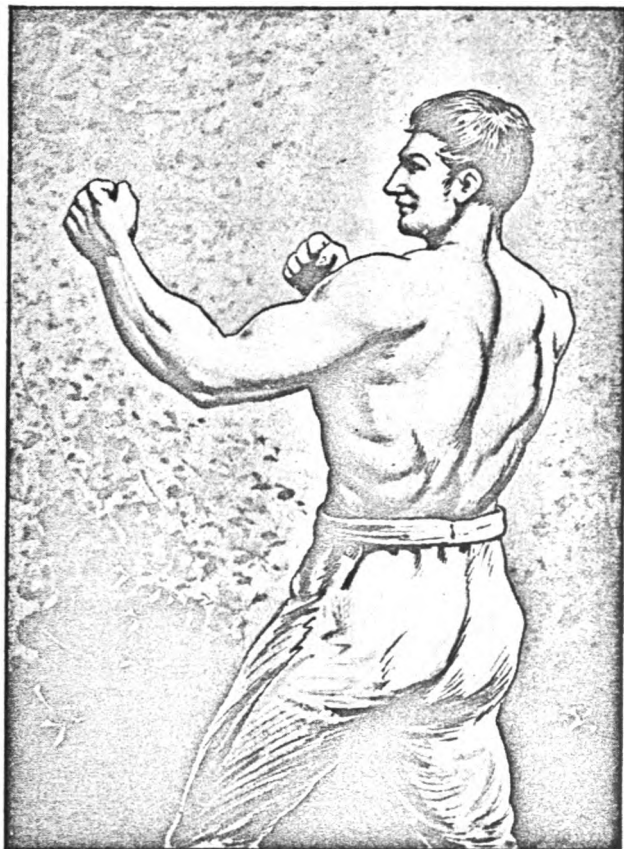
And his confidence was soon justified. Belcher's weakened constitution was unable to bear the strain put upon it. Gradually his rushes became more and more feeble and his blows lost their steam. As soon as Tom saw that his adversary's strength was ebbing, he changed his tactics, and instead of retreating began in his steady and dogged way to attack. Cribb was not a quick hitter, but he hit uncommonly hard when he did hit, and Jem's right forearm was soon black and blue with bruises from stopping Tom's heavy left-handers. By this time Belcher's hands were so fearfully swollen and cut by contact with Cribb's hard skull that he dared not hit with them, and all he could do was to stop his adversary's blows, which he did with consummate skill for some time. As long as Belcher

had any strength left he defied Cribb's efforts to beat him. But Jem grew weaker and weaker, and Tom was able to close and throw him heavily over and over again. Long after his chance of winning was hopelessly gone, Belcher with splendid pluck struggled against fate; but it was useless. Cribb threw him or punched him down every round, till at length, after forty minutes had expired, Jem, with his knuckles knocked up, his forearm frightfully swollen and paralysed by Tom's hits, his wind and sight gone, had to give in, and shed bitter tears of mortification when the sponge went up. Cribb could have gone on for another couple of hours—his grand stamina, strength and courage were such that I think he could that day have outworn and outlasted any man breathing.

It was Belcher's last fight. Never again was he seen inside a roped ring. His health rapidly declined. The twenty-eight days' imprisonment to which he was sentenced for this breach of the peace hastened the end, and within eighteen months he was

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buried in Marylebone Churchyard, amid genuine marks of grief from thousands of spectators, for there was not a more universal favourite among all classes in London than James Belcher, the Napoleon of the Prize Ring.



TOM CRIBB.

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III

TOM CRIBB AND MOLINEAUX

THE Stock Exchange has witnessed a good many sensational scenes in which the enthusiasm of its members in testifying their admiration for British pluck has been characteristically displayed. Tom Sayers and Captain Matthew Webb both received grand ovations on the occasion of their visits to "The House," and carried away with them very substantial proofs of the appreciation felt for their pluck and prowess. But perhaps the most creditable exhibition of generous good-feeling for a gallant but unfortunate hero which the members of the Stock Exchange ever gave was the welcome they accorded to

Thomas Molineaux, the Black, when Bill Richmond, his mentor, took him there two days after his great battle with Cribb on the 10th of December 1810. Possibly they felt rather ashamed of their countrymen for not showing more of the spirit of English fair-play towards the Black in that desperate battle. Anyhow, Molineaux had an ovation from members of "The House" on that memorable day, and came away with 45 guineas in his pocket.

I lay stress upon this incident, because in other respects the treatment which Molineaux received in England during his fighting career was not very creditable to British sportsmanship. I don't think that anyone can say that the "terrible Black" ever met with real fair play. Had he been treated, I will not say with generosity, but even with common justice, he would in my opinion have been Champion of England,

It was in the year 1809 that Thomas Molineaux arrived in London, and presented himself at Bob Gregson's Coffee

House in Holborn (afterwards the Castle Tavern, now the Napier). No one knew anything about him. He had no friends in the sporting world, no letters of introduction; he had come over from the United States believing that he could make a reputation as a bruiser if only a chance were given him, and he claimed hospitality solely on his merits. Very little is known of his antecedents beyond the fact that he was born of slave parents on a cotton plantation in Virginia, but was himself legally freed. One point, however, I have discovered, which was apparently unknown to the compilers of *Boxiana* and *Pugilistica* and that is that Molineaux had been for several years in the service of Mr Pinckney, the then Ambassador of the United States in London. I have no doubt that it was the fact that his old master held this important appointment in London that induced Molineaux to come over here, and Mr Pinckney was a very good friend to him after his arrival.

Bill Richmond, the celebrated coloured boxer, who then kept a flourishing tavern in the West End, was Molineaux's guide, philosopher and friend, and induced some of his noble patrons to give the Black a chance of showing what he could do with his fists. A West countryman named Burrows was selected as a trial horse, and Molineaux gave him such a tremendous hiding that the spectators were much impressed with the prowess of the new Black. Now Richmond had been beaten somewhat ignominiously by Cribb, and longed for revenge upon his conqueror. In Molineaux Bill thought he saw the instrument of vengeance, and consequently the Black was matched against Cribb for 200 guineas a-side and the Championship of England. The battle took place on Copthall Common on the 10th of December 1810, in the presence of an immense concourse of spectators. Molineaux was nervous at first, but soon gained confidence, and electrified the onlookers by the fierce fury of his fighting.

Cribb's guard was beaten down time after time, and at the close of the twenty-second round Molineaux had taken such a decided lead that the betting had veered round to 4 to 1 on him.

It was an awful crisis for the spectators. Here was the Champion of England being beaten before their eyes by a foreigner and a nigger! The excitement was intense. The timekeeper, old Sir Thomas Apreece, one of the finest sportsmen in the kingdom, was as agitated as anyone, and his voice trembled as he called "Time" for the twenty-third round, whilst from all parts of the crowd came an agonised cry of, "*Now, Tom, now; for God's sake don't let the nigger win! Remember the honour of Old England! Go for him, Tom; go for him!*" But amidst all this frenzy of excitement, Cribb, weak though he was, kept cool and calm. On came the Black like a maniac, lashing his long arms like flails, beating Tom's guard down and raining blows on his bruised and bleeding face. Down went Cribb at last,

and the spectators gasped. So utterly done and exhausted was the English Champion that he could not come up to time. He was fairly licked, but Joe Ward, his wily second, saved him. The crafty veteran suddenly rushed across the ring, and accused Richmond of putting a leaden bullet in each of Molineaux's hands. Bill indignantly denied the charge. But the Black was called upon to open his hands, which he did, and there was nothing there. A precious minute, however, had been gained, and Cribb recovered. A moment later the Black was seized with a fit of shivers—the cold had at last worked into his system—his strength went suddenly from him, he was helpless as a child. In the next three rounds Cribb floored and threw him with the greatest ease, till Molineaux fell into a stupor and could fight no more.

Never did men experience greater relief than the spectators of this fight when they learned that the "terrible Black" was senseless, and that the English Champion

had pulled the victory out of the fire. The cheering for Cribb was frantic as, after the hardest hour's fighting he had ever had, he left the ring victorious. But if Molineaux had had fair play he should have been hailed the conqueror. In the first place, it was cruel to ask the native of a tropical clime to strip to the skin on a bleak English December-day. In the second place, when Molineaux had fairly knocked Cribb out of time, it was grossly unfair that the Englishman's seconds, by a trick which the referee must have seen and ought to have stopped, should have given their man a clear two minute's breathing space. Indeed, as soon as the Black looked like winning, the sympathies of the crowd all went with Cribb. Molineaux was hooted and cursed, and the people were frantic with rage at the possibility of the English Champion being defeated.

In a letter addressed to the newspapers, Molineaux attributed his defeat to the effects of the bitter cold, which paralysed him towards the close of the battle, and expressed

his readiness to fight Cribb again as soon as arrangements could be made.

But meanwhile another aspirant to fistic fame challenged the Black. This was one Will Rimmer, a strapping young countryman, who had come up to London in the belief that he could win fame and fortune in the Prize Ring. He seems to have had some friends who had faith in his abilities, for 100 guineas were planked on his behalf to fight the Black. Crafty old Bill Richmond, the famous coloured boxer, who was Molineaux's "gaffer," thought this was a soft thing for his man, and took it on. A victory over Rimmer would give Molineaux confidence, and afford him a better chance of coping with Cribb should they meet again in the ring. So Molineaux and Rimmer were matched. The fight came off at Moulsey Hurst on May 11, 1811, and the Englishman met with a crushing defeat. Such a fearful hiding, indeed, did Molineaux inflict on his opponent, that the whole sporting world was eager to see him again matched with Cribb. Tom, of course, was bound to

defend his title to the championship, and a second match was made with Molineaux for 600 guineas.

The excitement which this match produced all over the country was greater than that created by the first contest between the two men. Those who had witnessed that fight knew how terrific was the onslaught of the nigger, and how at one time he was within an ace of winning. After the way in which Molineaux had polished off Rimmer, there seemed every probability that, if the battle were fought in weather more suitable to Molineaux's constitution, Cribb would have a very tough task to lick him.

Now, up to this time the system of training in vogue among prize-fighters was of a very primitive character. The father of scientific training was the famous Captain Barclay, the hero of the great Thousand Miles in a Thousand Hours Match, a feat which no one else succeeded in accomplishing, though many tried, till little William Gale, of Cardiff, came out some few years ago, and wiped out the Captain's record completely,

doing 1,500 miles in a thousand hours at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles each hour. Barclay trained himself for his wonderful pedestrian exploits on a method of his own, which became the recognised mode of getting men fit for fighting, running, and rowing, and continued to be accepted as the best process till it was exploded some twenty years ago.

Captain Barclay was a fine, powerful man, and was reckoned the best amateur boxer of his day. Indeed, so good was he at the game, that whenever any fresh man came forward in the London Ring, the captain put on the gloves with him to try him, and the result of the trial went a long way towards deciding the future of the new aspirant. But it was among the "things not generally known" that Barclay had a pair of gloves stuffed specially for his trials—in reality not half stuffed—whilst the other man, of course, had the well-padded regulation muffers. When Bill Richmond brought Molineaux out he took him round to Jackson's rooms, and it was agreed that the Black was to have a set-to with the Captain the next morning.

Barclay was late in turning up, and when he arrived found that Molineaux had got on his *special gloves*. Being either too proud or too much ashamed to ask for his own mittens, the Captain was "hoist with his own petard," for the Black landed him a blow on the body which broke one of his ribs. Barclay never forgave the nigger for thus besting him, though poor Molineaux was perfectly innocent in the matter. And this, so old Mr Charles Wheeler assured me, and he knew Barclay well, was the reason why the Captain took such an interest in Cribb's second match with the Black, and offered to train Tom at his own expense.

Cribb was only too proud to place himself under such a renowned athlete and trainer, and away he went to Captain Barclay's seat at Ury, up in the Highlands of Scotland. For eleven weeks Tom was hard at it. At first it was jolly enough for him. He was allowed to wander through the woods and over the moors with his gun, and had a high old time, just to enable him to get used to the mountain air. But when the Captain

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began the training in good earnest, Master Tom was put through the mill with a vengeance. Barclay was a six-mile-an-hour walker, and he forced Cribb to keep up with him till it could have been said of poor Tom, with his sixteen stone odd of too, too solid flesh, as of fat Jack Falstaff—

“He sweats to death,
And lards the lean earth as he walks along.”

Beginning at ten miles a day, Tom reached his regular thirty miles per diem, at the Captain's pace, besides two good mile spins at running pace every day. The result was that Cribb was reduced from 16st. odd to 13st. 6lb., a full stone less than when he first fought Molineaux; and when he showed himself to his friends in London the week before the battle they were amazed at his condition. No man, up to that time, had ever stepped into the ring in such grand fettle as Tom Cribb then displayed.

And how had it fared with Molineaux in the meanwhile? Badly indeed. Bill Richmond and Tom Belcher took him about the

country on an exhibition tour, and their only thought was how to pull in the "spondulicks." The Black was a man of very queer temper. When anything put him out he was as uncontrollable as a mad bull, and as obstinate as a mule. In order to keep him in a good humour Belcher and Richmond let him have his way, and he ran riot. Perhaps it would have been impossible for anyone to have persuaded him to go into training. But I cannot help thinking that if some man of strong will and commanding influence, like Captain Barclay, had taken him up, Molineaux might have been brought into the ring as fit as Cribb was. Pampered and flattered wherever he went, the "terrible Black" scorned the idea of training. His own herculean frame, his own mighty muscles and dauntless heart were enough, he thought, to pull him through. Neither Cribb nor any other man breathing he felt sure could stand against his ferocious rush and the sweep of his tremendous arms.

Thistleton Gap, on the borders of Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, was the spot fixed for

the fight, and an immense crowd, numbering over 20,000, and including all the best sportsmen in England, gathered there on the morning of September 28, 1811, to witness the great fight for the Championship of England between Thomas Cribb of Gloucestershire, and Thomas Molineaux of Virginia.

Cribb's condition when he stood up stripped excited the wonder and admiration of all beholders. They had never seen such a picture of perfectly-trained athletic manhood. His skin was as white as a duchess's—whiter, perhaps, than some of them—it shone like satin. All the flesh was gone from his big frame, which looked gaunt and bony to those who had only known him in his portly state; but though you could count his ribs, there was the marvellous wealth of muscle, the hard, ruddy look of his face and the brightness of his eyes that unmistakably betokened the perfection of health and strength. Molineaux, by way of preparation for the work before him, had a few minutes previ-

ously wolfed a chicken and an apple pie, washed down with about half a gallon of porter. And Belcher and Richmond had actually looked on and let him do it without remonstrance. Yet, for all his laxity of life, the Black looked a formidable foe. His immense chest and shoulders, his long, round, muscular arms, his bull-neck, all suggested enormous power. And there was an expression of savage ferocity on his hideous face and in the gleam of his great rolling eyes that made many a spectator shudder and feel thankful that he had not to stand up against this terrible nigger. Molineaux was two inches shorter than Cribb—5ft. 8½in. and 5ft. 10½in. were their respective heights—but he weighed a stone heavier and looked far the bulkier and bigger man.

When the Black saw Cribb stripped he stared at him in amazement, and wouldn't at first believe that it was the same man he had fought ten months before. "Dat's not Massa Cribb—nebber. Dis is a strange man." And, indeed, it was difficult to

recognise good old round-faced, portly Tom in this gaunt figure, as lean as a greyhound. The change intensely astonished Molineaux—it alarmed him. He admitted afterwards that he never realised what training could do for a man till he saw Cribb before him, all bone, muscle and sinew. However, the one thing to be done was to beat the white man before his superior condition could tell. And, like a tornado, the Black swept down on his foe. Calm, steady and confident, Cribb met the rush, but such was the impetus and fury of Molineaux that he bore Tom back. For a moment it seemed as if all Cribb's science was of no avail against this terrific hurricane fighter. The Black hit pretty straight with the left, but brought the right down with a smashing overhand blow that was difficult to time and guard. And the rapidity with which he lashed out with both hands was extraordinary. With this storm of blows rattling about his head, Cribb naturally got confused. Like flails the nigger's long arms came whish, whish! swish, swish! through the air with such

fearful force that Tom's guard was beaten down, and he was hit off his feet at the ropes.

The backers of the Englishman looked blue, all except Captain Barclay, who stood to win £10,000 on Cribb. The Captain had posted himself at Tom's corner, so as to be able to give advice, and at the end of the round he said, "All right, Tom: just what I told you to expect. Keep steady, and the fight's your own. Keep him moving, and he'll beat himself, and save you the trouble."

But things looked far from gay with Cribb in the next round. Molineaux cut his lip open with an overhand blow, and gained first blood — then, after a fierce tussle, threw Tom a burster. In the next round Cribb's right eye was closed by a tremendous overhand smack, but he kept steady and aimed his blows at the body. One fearful hit on the mark doubled Molineaux up, and very nearly sent him off his legs, but he recovered, closed, and threw Cribb again.

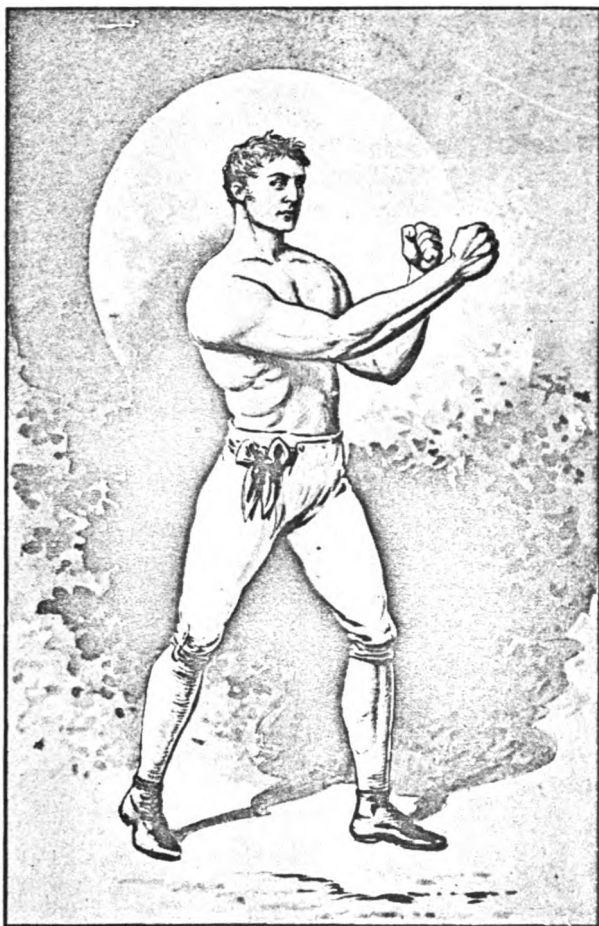
The fighting now was fast and furious. Molineaux was all over Cribb's head and face with both hands—frequently beating down his guard with his terrific sweeping blows—whilst Tom steadily pegged away with both hands at the body, and though his hits didn't *show*, they were doing deadly damage. Not a cheer did Molineaux get, he heard nothing but curses and shouts to Cribb to wake up and kill the black brute; for the sight of the Englishman's bruised and bloody face drove the crowd mad. Tom was certainly badly punished; from nose and mouth the blood ran in streams, the right eye was closed, and the left had a mouse under it, whilst no one could detect a mark on Molineaux's ugly black visage.

But it was easy to see from the nigger's heaving chest and sides that he was terribly distressed—partly from his own bad condition, partly from the severity of Tom's body blows. Cribb faced him cool and smiling. This maddened Molineaux, who gnashed his teeth with rage, and dashed fiendishly at his foe. Tom stepped back, and as the Black

came in gave him one in the pit of the stomach that doubled him up, and he fell on his knees groaning.

Nevertheless, distressed though he was, Molineaux fought so fiercely in the next two rounds and stuck to his work so gamely that Tom himself showed signs of exhaustion. They were only momentary, however. One more terrific rally there was, in which the Black had the best of the hitting, and struck Cribb on his knees. Then the tide of battle turned in Cribb's favour. Molineaux, frantic at finding his wind and strength going, threw himself away in his mad rushes. Tom sent him down with an awful punch in the stomach, and in the next round floored him with a straight left-hander between the eyes. After that it was all over with the Black. His distress was awful to witness. Cribb hit him about all over the ring as he pleased; then, with a terrific cross-counter from the right, broke the Black's jaw and stretched him senseless. So, after twenty minutes' fighting, victory rested with Old England and Tom Cribb.

Molineaux fought four battles subsequently, and clever George Cooper of Staffordshire was the only other man who beat him. Cribb retired on his laurels and took up the peaceful pursuits of coal merchant and publican, in neither of which, however, was he as successful as he had been in the roped arena. He died in 1848 at the age of sixty-seven, and his monument in Woolwich churchyard still forms a conspicuous landmark to passing ships.



TOM SPRING.

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IV

TOM SPRING AND JACK LANGAN

THERE is no name on the long roll of British boxers more worthy of honour and respect than that of Tom Spring. He was one of Nature's gentlemen—brave, honest, courteous, big-hearted—a true friend and a generous foe. Twelve great battles he fought in the Prize Ring, and only once was he beaten, and then by a man whom he had thrashed before, and would very likely have thrashed again had they fought out the rubber. That man was good old Ned Painter, of Norwich, afterwards Tom's dearest pal. It is a remarkable fact that Tom Spring's closest and best friends were the two men with whom he had his hardest and most

desperate fights—Ned Painter and Jack Langan. I remember being taken to Spring's house in my early youth by an enthusiastic old patron of the ring. It was on the 7th of January, and I think the year was 1851. When my companion ordered drinks, Tom said, "No, you drink with me to-day." He produced some glorious Irish potheen. "What do you think of that?" said he. "Prime," remarked my mentor. "Well, it ought to be," said Tom. "I've had it over four years in my cellar, and it's a drop of the last that poor Jack Langan sent me. You know he always sent me a keg of the very best on every anniversary of my first fight with him."

Now, wasn't that "real pretty," as the Yankees say, of Langan, to send his old adversary and conqueror a keg of the finest Irish whisky wherewith to commemorate the great fight in which the vanquished distinguished himself as gallantly as the victor? In that noble liquor I drank to the memory of John Langan, who had shuffled off this mortal coil four years before.

Langan died a wealthy man, worth £30,000, for he had a fine business as hotelkeeper and wine merchant in Liverpool. His house was not far from the Clarence Dock, and every Irishman landing in Liverpool made a point of looking up Langan, for Jack's countrymen were proud of him, and with good reason, for a better man never trod in shoe leather. In those days, before reaping-machines were known, the Irish harvestmen used to come over in swarms to cut the English farmers' corn, and every man of them had free quarters at Langan's for two days and two nights: porridge and potatoes and stew—beer galore—a night-cap of potheen, and a clean shake-down of straw; the only condition John exacted was that all sickles and shillelaghs should be handed over to his keeping, so that there might be no breaking of heads under his roof.

But to come back to Spring. Not very long ago I met a venerable parson from Herefordshire, a mighty oarsman and cricketer in his 'varsity days, who had

known Spring well, and whose father remembered the Champion when, as the lad Tom Winter, he used to drive his master's cart (he was apprenticed to a butcher) from Fownhope to Hereford every market day. The old Duke of Norfolk, the famous *gourmand* "Jockey of Norfolk," celebrated for his table exploits, who figures so often in Gilray's caricatures, whom, when an octogenarian, the "First Gentleman in Europe" and his royal brothers made drunk under peculiarly disgraceful circumstances at the Brighton Pavilion—the old Duke, I say, then kept open house at his noble seat of Holm Lacy on the banks of the Wye, just opposite to the village of Fownhope. And young Winter, who was renowned for his athletic prowess all round that countryside by the time he was eighteen, was a constant visitor at the Duke's place, and a great favourite with his Grace, who was fond of collecting the most heterogeneous assemblies of guests to partake of his sumptuous venison and turtle feasts. To amuse his company, the Duke used to get up

sports and sparring matches on the lawn, and Tom was the king of these revels. So delighted was old "Jockey of Norfolk" often with the skill, agility and grace displayed by the young athlete, that he would come hobbling across the grass as fast as his gout would permit him, clap Tom on the back and swear that there never was a Greek demigod to compare with him. One evening, when his Grace was beginning to grow feeble, he called Tom up to him as he sat in his easy-chair on the lawn, and, laying his hand on the young boxer's arm, nodded towards the noble oaks with which the park was studded, and said, "Winter, I would sacrifice a few of those sticks to possess such limbs as yours, and be able to do what you can do."

It was Tom Cribb who first brought Spring into notice. His real name, by the way, was Winter, Spring being the *nom de guerre* conferred on him by the facetious Paddington Jones, M.C. of the Fives Court. The old Champion visited Hereford on a sparring tour, and was so

struck with the youngster's "form" that he persuaded him to come up to London—at least, when I say "persuaded," I mean that he spoke so highly of Winter's abilities that the young man's head was turned, and to the metropolis he would go to seek his fortune, throwing up a good business and excellent prospects to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp, Fame. The Prize Ring was at the zenith of its glory when the young Herefordshire athlete reached the capital. Those were the days when the Fives Court on a benefit night was crowded with the *crème de la crème* of the aristocracy, when royal dukes applauded the skill of Jackson, Mendoza, Cribb, Belcher, John Gully, Dutch Sam, George Cooper and the terrible Gasman, and St Martin's lane was blocked with carriages, like Bow Street and Catherine Street nowadays when a popular opera is on at Covent Garden. When Spring made his first appearance in the Fives Court, Bill Richmond the Black, an exceedingly well-spoken man (who was once servant to the ill-fated Lord Camelford).

pointed him out to the Marquis of Worcester, with whom the sable warrior was conversing at the moment, and said, "My lord, here is a young fellow come up among us, a pal of Tom Cribb's, who will be a teaser among the big ones at some day not far off; you may be sure there is nothing to hinder his reaching the top of the tree." And reach the top of the tree he did, though I have no space here to enumerate the steps by which he rose to that proud eminence, for I wish to confine myself to his battles with Langan.

Langan's life had been a most adventurous one. Born in Dublin in the year 1798—when the Great Rebellion was in full swing—he was soon celebrated among the rough denizens of Mud Island as a "broth of a bhoys" for a fight or any other kind of devilment. In due course he went to sea in the merchant service. Then, tiring of a sailor's life, he settled down on *terra firma*, and sprang into celebrity as a fighter by licking a big fellow named M'Gowran, who was reckoned invincible. Jack's next opponent

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was Pat Halton, the pet pupil of the great "Sir" Daniel Donnelly. That fight ended in a wrangle and a draw; but there seems little doubt that Halton would have been thrashed had the fight not been stopped. This led to an altercation with the great Dan, and Langan, whilst admitting that Dan was probably too good for him, nevertheless offered to fight him, and backed himself not to be licked inside half an hour. But Donnelly wisely declined to risk his reputation (which was far bigger than his actions merited), and thereby probably saved himself from a thrashing, for I am pretty confident that Langan would have knocked the stuffing out of that grossly overrated Champion of Ireland.

Just at that time a certain Colonel Mead was enrolling an Irish Brigade in Dublin to go out and help the South American Republics in their revolt against Spain. Jack enlisted and went out with the expedition to the Isle of St Marguerite, where they had an awful time. Sickness and starvation swept the men off like flies, and the survivors

fell into a state of the deepest despondency. At this crisis Jack Langan, who had attained the rank of Quarter-Master Sergeant, proved himself worth his weight in gold. For he went about among his sick comrades with a cheery smile and a word of hope for everyone. He did the work of ten men, and kept up his spirits at concert pitch. Wherever he went his bright laughter and fun made sunshine. Men who thought themselves dying couldn't help roaring over Jack's jokes and wheezes, whilst his voice might be heard night and day singing like a lark. The life and soul of that Camp of Despair was merry, light-hearted, dauntless Jack Langan, whilst when there was a bit of a fight on there was not such a dare-devil among them as the "Mud Island bhoy."

When at last Jack got back to Dublin he found that his fame had preceded him, and he was at once made a popular idol. A jolly time he had of it till Miss Katty Flynn captivated his heart. They loved not wisely but too well, and when the usual consequences happened Miss Flynn brought an action

against the gallant Jack for seduction and breach of promise. It was in vain that Jack's eloquent counsel pointed out that it was really Miss Flynn who was the seducer, for she had deliberately set her cap at Mr Langan and lured him on. But of what avail was the eloquence of Counsellor Silvertongue against the far more persuasive eloquence of Miss Flynn's sobs and tears in the witness-box. The jury as they looked at her felt their hearts melt, and were convinced that Jack was a villain. So they awarded the fair Katty £100 damages and all her costs. As poor Jack could not have paid the fifth part of that sum to save his soul, and as he had no mind to be locked up in Mountjoy Prison for the best part of his natural life, he promptly made tracks for England.

At Manchester he had the good fortune to fall in with his fellow-countryman, Tom Reynolds, then a man of mark in the Prize Ring, and a well-to-do potato merchant to boot. Reynolds took Jack in hand and backed him against Mat Vipond (Weeping Mat), whom Langan handsomely licked. Tom was

so pleased with the performance of his *protégé* that he took him up to London, introduced him to some rich and influential Irish sportsmen, and the result was that Langan was thought good enough to be matched straight-away against no less a hero than the Champion of England himself, Tom Spring.

Now Spring was then at the height of his fame. His consecutive victories over Jack Carter, Ben Burn, Bob Burn, Josh Hudson, Tom Oliver, and the great Bill Neate, of Bristol, had left him without a rival among the heavy-weights of England. Only one man had ever beaten him, and that was good old Ned Painter, of Norwich, and Spring had thrashed Painter in their first battle, and would probably have done so in a third had they fought out the rubber; but from this time they struck up such a warm friendship that nothing could have induced them to fight again. Langan, therefore, was flying at very big game indeed when he took on Tom Spring. They fought on the Pitchcroft just outside the city of Worcester, on the 7th of January 1824, in the presence of 30,000 spectators.

After a stubbornly-contested battle of two hours and twenty minutes, Spring won. But the battle between them proved that Langan was justified in making the match, for, though conquered, he fought gamely, and gave Tom more trouble than any other man he had ever tackled. Spring's defence was so magnificent that all Langan's dashes were foiled, and, worn out by the repeated failures of his desperate attacks, he fell exhausted. Nevertheless neither Langan nor his backers would admit that Tom was the better man, and the two were matched again for the big stake of 500 guineas a-side.

When the second match was made, so great was the confidence in Spring that 3 and 4 to 1 was laid on him. Tom, however, knew that he had a very dangerous and determined foe to meet, and never in his life did he train more carefully.

The battle was fixed to take place at Warwick, but at the last moment Mr Hewlings, of the Swan Inn, Chichester, offered the men £200 if they would fight at that city, and the offer was accepted,

though so late that many persons, ignorant of the change, journeyed to Warwick, and were woefully disappointed when they found that the battle was taking place a couple of hundred miles away.

June 8, 1824, was the date fixed, and for twenty-four hours previously Chichester was in a state of the wildest excitement, for coaches and post-chaises kept pouring into the town in an endless stream till every inn was crammed, and a guinea was charged for the humblest shake-down for the night. Not even at the time of Goodwood races has the old city ever witnessed such an influx of visitors as flowed in to see the great fight between Tom Spring and Jack Langan. The spot selected for the combat was Birdham Bridge, about three miles from the city, which being bordered by the canal, and only to be approached by a drawbridge, afforded fine scope for gate money. Sixty great waggons were ranged round the wooden stage on which the men were to fight, and there were raised stands behind these capable of holding many hundreds of people.

I have never seen any reliable statement as to the numbers present; but Mr Hewlings netted at least £300 over and above the £200 which he gave to the combatants.

Just before leaving his hotel for the field of battle, Langan was introduced to an Irish lady, the beautiful wife of Colonel O'Brien, who presented him with a gorgeous silk handkerchief—green, bearing in the centre the harp of "Ould Oireland"—and begged him to let her fasten it round his neck and send him forth as Ireland's chosen champion. But Jack very sensibly declined to make the contest a national affair. He said that it was a purely private matter between himself and Spring to decide which was the better man, and did not deserve to be elevated to the dignity of an international encounter. Therefore he preferred wearing his own colours, the "black fogle." Then beautiful Mrs O'Brien with her own fair hands hung the sable scarf round Jack's neck, saying as she did so, "You are Irish—colour is immaterial to a brave man. Glory is your only object. Go, then, and conquer, and Ireland will be

proud of you." So Jack went forth like a knight of old wearing his lady's favour, ready to do battle for the same against all comers.

The stage was raised 6ft. from the ground, and none but the seconds, umpires, and referee were allowed to come within 12ft. of it.

When Spring stepped on the platform stripped to the waist his appearance excited general admiration. Never in his life had he looked so big and well. His condition was perfect. 13st. 6lb. he weighed, and stood 6ft. all but a quarter of an inch. A beautifully-made man he was, with a handsome, intelligent face, and a grace and symmetry about his frame that no sculptor has ever surpassed in bronze or marble. Langan figured small beside him, for Jack stood but 5ft. 9½in., and scaled only a trifle over 12st. Nevertheless, the Irishman looked hard, brown and muscular, not a well-made athlete, but unquestionably very powerful, whilst his hands were probably the biggest ever seen on a man of his size. After they

had shaken hands Jack lifted the flaps of his drawers and said, "Now you see, Tom, I've got no belt as they said I had the last time." "No, Jack, I see you haven't. Nor have I; look and judge for yourself." "Ah, bedad, I'll take your word, Tom. You're too much of a gentleman to play any thricks."

To lovers of science the fight was a most fascinating spectacle. No boxer that ever breathed has surpassed or even perhaps equalled Tom Spring in the perfection of his defence. He was armed at all points, and defied his adversary to get at him. His guard was superb, and his wonderful quickness on his legs served him well in getting away. He could duck his head, too, as quickly as a feather-weight. The beautiful precision with which he stopped Langan's terrific blows was a treat to see. Tom did not hit hard as a rule, but he hit for points, and his blows were always effective. Over and over again he would land on the same spot till a trifling bruise developed into a huge lump and a little cut was enlarged into a gaping wound.

What his contemporaries called "Spring's harlequin step" bothered Langan greatly. Tom would advance till he looked like attacking—Jack, eager to forestall him, would let out, and hey, presto! Spring was out of distance in an instant. The force of Langan's blows caused him to overreach himself, and before he could recover Tom had neatly and dexterously planted a couple of stingers just where Jack least liked them.

Tom's great defect lay in his hands. They were soft and puffy, and soon swelled to a great size, becoming so tender that it was agony to him to hit with them. It was so on this occasion. But in the early part of the fight he marked Langan considerably about the face.

Jack, finding all his blows stopped and all his rushes foiled, gave up hitting almost entirely and dashed in to close and wrestle. He generally caught a nasty one before he came to grips; but he proved himself a good wrestler, and several times threw Spring heavily on the hard boards. And you can guess how pleasant a tumble on

those planks, with a 12st. man on the top of you, must have been under a broiling June sun. But in the long run Tom had the best of the throwing, too, and every bone in Langan's body must have ached for days afterwards from the effects of those severe concussions.

Of slashing hitting there was little or none. That sort of thing didn't suit Tom's soft hands, and Langan soon grew tired of lashing out when never a blow got past Spring's guard. There was hardly a stage, I think, from start to finish at which Tom had not the fight safe; but he never relaxed his vigilance and caution nor changed his style of fighting. He just wore his man out by his cool, imperturbable defence. He fought with his head and legs more than with his fists, for his brain was always clear, his temper calm, and his active pedestals ready to carry him quickly backwards or forwards as he wished. Once when Tom flung Langan with great force against one of the rails everyone thought the fight was over, for with such a crash did Jack's head come against the

woodwork that it seemed impossible for any human skull to stand the shock without fracture or concussion of the brain. But though a big, ugly lump was raised along the side of the Irishman's scalp, he came up to "time," and fought with desperate but unavailing gallantry for no less than forty-nine rounds.

Langan had stipulated with his backers and seconds beforehand that no attempt was to be made to stop him from continuing the fight, except with his own consent, and he held them sternly to their bond, even when his case was hopeless. "Leave me alone, I *will* fight," he cried, when his seconds would have held him back and the humaner members of the crowd were calling out, "Take him away—take the brave fellow away—he'll only be killed if he goes on." But Jack *would* go on, though his trembling knees could hardly support him and his back and sides were one mass of bruises from perpetual throws on the hard wooden stage. The gallant Irishman was now entirely at Spring's mercy. Tom could have lifted

him and hurled him on the planks with stunning force in every round had he chosen, but he contented himself with just shoving his foe down with an open-handed push. At last the indomitable Jack was so weak that he stumbled and fell on his face as he was tottering to the scratch; and there he lay senseless for a couple of minutes or more, whilst Spring was hailed the winner after a battle which had lasted an hour and fifty minutes. Spring's hands were in an awful state. His principal backer, Mr Lawrence Sant, the Wandsworth brewer, came up to him on the stage and said, "If ever you fight again I will never speak to you any more, Tom. I never saw such bad hands in my life." "Sir," said the victorious Spring, "I never will fight again." And he never did.

Thenceforward Spring was known to fame as the Boniface of the Castle Tavern in Holborn, which George Borrow has thus immortalised in *Lavengro*:—"Hail to thee, Tom of Hereford, or by whatever name it may please thee to be called,

Spring or Winter! Hail to thee, six-foot Englishman of the brown eye, worthy to have carried a six-foot bow at Flodden, where England's yeomen triumphed over Scotland's king, his clans and chivalry! Hail to thee, last of England's bruisers, after all the many victories which thou has achieved—true English victories, unbought by yellow gold; need I recount them? Nay, nay! they are already known to fame—suffice it to say that Bristol's Bull and Ireland's Champion were vanquished by thee; and one mightier still, gold itself, thou didst overcome, for gold itself strove in vain to deaden the power of thy arm; and thus thou didst proceed till men left off challenging thee, the unvanquishable and incorruptible. 'Tis a treat to see thee, Tom of Hereford, in thy 'public' in Holborn way, whither thou hast retired with thy well-earned bays. 'Tis Friday night, and nine by Holborn clock. There sits the yeoman at the end of the long room, surrounded by his friends; glasses are filled, and 'A song' is the cry, and

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a song is sung well suited to the place; it finds an echo in every heart—fists are clenched, arms are waved, and the portraits of the mighty fighting men of yore, Broughton and Slack and Ben, which adorn the walls, appear to smile grim approbation, whilst many a manly voice joins in the bold chorus:—

“Here’s a health to old honest John Bull,
When he’s gone we sha’n’t find such another,
And with hearts and with glasses brim full
We will drink to old England, his mother.”

In this popular hostelry Spring passed the rest of his days, and there, deeply lamented by the thousands who knew and appreciated his worth, he died on the 20th of August 1851.

V

ALEC REID AND BISHOP SHARPE

A MEDIUM-SIZED, thick-set man, who wore rings in his ears and had his jet-black hair in ringlets—dressed in a rough pilot-jacket, with a striped jersey showing underneath—not a bad-looking fellow—for his features, tanned and weather-beaten as they were, were distinctly regular; that is the picture I have in my mind's eye of Bishop Sharpe, the Bold Smuggler of Woolwich. A very devil to fight he was. I have heard of his taking on three sturdy man-o'-war's men at once, and thrashing the lot. Indeed, I suppose that for many years of his life there was never a week went by that the Bishop hadn't two or three turns-up. He had a style of fighting all his own. Like

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Ned Turner, Bendigo, and Jem Edwards of Cheltenham, he fought right foot foremost. He had one deadly blow, a left-hander on the "mark"—the spot where the ribs part from the breast-bone. The Bishop would give his head away and not care a straw what punishment he got in order to put in that one fatal hit. He would wait and wait for his chance, and when it came he never let it slip. On one memorable occasion, indeed, the chance never came, and he was licked before he could get in his favourite blow, but that only happened once in the course of a career which included no less than seventeen big fights. It was a singular record, for, according to all the rules of science, Bishop Sharpe ought to have lost at least half the battles he fought, seeing that he gave himself away in the most reckless manner. But the odd thing was that, in defiance of scientific rules, the Bishop beat men who were far superior to himself in every point which is considered necessary to make a good prize-fighter. I recall the time, not long since, when

Sam Baxter frightened half the boxers in England by that terrible "outer" from the right, which won him no end of battles. His opponents were half licked before they came into the ring, such a funk had Sam established by that terrific blow. It was just the same with Bishop Sharpe. The men who opposed him were so nervous about that fearful shot at the "mark," so anxious to guard against it that they couldn't do justice to themselves; their powers of attack were cramped, and they fell victims to the very blow which they spent so much trouble and thought in trying to avoid.

I don't know when Bishop Sharpe shuffled off this mortal coil, but for many years his bronzed and battered frontispiece was familiar to race-goers and ring-goers, for he generally had a booth, for the sale of liquors and the display of boxing, at every fair and race-meeting within fifty miles of London, and he was sure to turn up whenever there was a fight on, if he had to tramp thirty miles to get to the trysting-place. Nor do I know where the

Bold Smuggler was born. I believe he had been to sea, both in the navy and the merchant service. But his seafaring was mostly done on coasting traders, and he was reported to have seen a good bit of smuggling in his day; hence his nickname. I daresay this was true, for he was a bold, hardy, reckless, dare-devil chap, who must have been invaluable in any business where nerve and dash and smartness were required.

In the year 1824, the time with which I am now dealing, Bishop Sharpe had already made himself a considerable reputation in the ring. He had fought eleven battles, and had not lost one. Twice he had thrashed the well-known Gipsy Cooper, and once fought a draw with him. But his habits were so irregular, and he was so frequently not to be found when he was wanted, for he would go off on a moment's notice on one of his mysterious expeditions, supposed to be connected with smuggling, that people were shy of standing him his battle money for a match, otherwise he might have done much bigger things in the P.R. than he did. However, he

was all there when some of his admirers wanted to back him against a smart young fellow from Chelsea named Alec Reid, who had made great way as a fighter.

Few names are more familiar to students of fistic lore than that of Alec Reid, the Chelsea Snob. "Cool, swift-hitting Alec," as George Borrow, the great traveller and gipsy linguist, calls him. He was the hero of twenty hard-fought battles, of which he only lost three. For the ten years that he was before the public as a fighting member of the Prize Ring there was no better man of his weight in England. And I doubt whether he would ever have been beaten if he had not taken on men too big and heavy for him.

His father was a veteran pensioner at Chelsea Hospital, and Alec himself was born in that suburb on the 20th of October 1802, and died there at the age of seventy-five. By trade he was a shoemaker, hence his nickname of "the Snob." At the time when he was matched against Bishop Sharpe, Alec had eleven fights to his record, and the only man who had beaten him was Dick Defoe or

Dufour, a very clever fighter, who used to live in Rochester Row, Westminster, and only died, I think, some ten or twelve years ago. Defoe was an all-round athlete, and amongst other accomplishments could throw a cricket ball further than any man of his time. I believe he was the only man who ever threw upwards of 100 yards *both ways*. He never did very much in the Prize Ring. *Fistiana* only credits him with three battles—one with Alec Reid, whom he licked; one with Reuben Martin, who licked him; and a third with a nameless "Bully" at Camberwell Fair, whom he thrashed. But he was a very clever boxer, with a long reach, of which he knew well how to avail himself. His victory over Alec Reid, however, was something of a fluke; he knocked Alec out of time with a chance blow on the point of the jaw, and when the Chelsea Snob challenged him to a second trial declined on the score of ill-health.

It will be seen, then, that Alec's record was equal to Sharpe's in the number of fights, but there was one defeat set against Reid's

name and none against the Bishop's. Both of them had fought Gipsy Cooper. Alec had licked the "Romany Cove" in twenty minutes, Sharpe had taken eighty-five minutes over the job the first time, thirty-nine minutes the second time, and the third fight ended in a draw, after they had been at it for more than an hour and a half. Taking a line from their respective performances against the Gipsy, public form seemed to point to Alec as the better man. But the Bishop's backers didn't believe in public form so far as it affected their man, for the Bold Smuggler was not to be judged by ordinary rules. So they put down the £50 for him readily enough, and the pair were matched to fight on the 16th of December 1824.

But those who expected an interesting and exciting contest were woefully disappointed. In the very first round there was something so suspicious about Alec's movements that Tom Oliver, who was seconding him, said angrily, "If you don't mean to fight, say so, and I'll leave the ring." Alec only laughed, and faced his man in the same careless,

nonchalant way as before, so utterly unlike his usual style of fighting, that everybody could see he didn't mean business. When the Bishop rushed at him he went down without a semblance of resistance. Sharpe was *apparently* puzzled what to make of it, though I suspect that he was really in the know and well aware of the game Alec was playing. Certainly, he never hit with anything like the vim expected of him. He caught Reid a smack in the mouth in the fourth round, open-handed, it was said. Anyhow, down went Alec, and lay quite still. This was too much for his seconds, who walked out of the ring and left him there. Then the Chelsea Snob slowly rose, whilst the spectators hissed, and, putting on an air of injured innocence, said he was quite ready to go on with the fight. As his seconds had disappeared, however, the referee stopped the proceedings, and said that under the circumstances he should declare the battle a draw, and order each man's stakes to be returned to him. It was such a palpable attempt at a cross that Alec was for some time under a

cloud. But a brilliant victory over Jubb, the Cheltenham champion, in the following year, when the stakes were £100 a-side, and another in quick succession over Bill Savage restored Alec to favour and wiped out the stain upon his character. Then Alec challenged Bishop Sharpe again, and this time there could be no doubt that the Chelsea Snob meant business. Sharpe, who in the meanwhile had added to his long list of victories by thrashing Ben Warwick, accepted the challenge, and a second match was made for £50 a-side.

Alec had proved himself such a brilliant fighter in his last two engagements that the Fancy looked forward to a real treat when he should meet the formidable Smuggler of Woolwich. With this expectation some hundreds journeyed to No Man's Land, on the other side of St Albans, on the 6th of September 1826, eager to see whether Bishop Sharpe would maintain his invincibility against the smart and game young fighter from Chelsea. Alec himself had no doubt as to the issue. He said the Bishop

had only one blow, and he knew how to stop that; that he would blind Sharpe with upper cuts as he gave his head away to get home that blow.

A rosy-faced, healthy, wholesome-looking chap was Alec; 5ft. 7in. in height, and 10st. 7lbs. in weight, clean-made from head to foot, active, muscular, and full of go; the picture of a middle-weight boxer. The Bishop was about the same height and weight, but of a very different build—thick-set and burly, much bigger about the chest and shoulders than Alec, not anything like such a model of symmetry, but a very ugly customer, hard as oak, strong as a bull, with a look of desperate determination on his brown, weather-beaten face. Reid's attitude was the perfection of elegance, and he stood lightly poised on the balls of his feet, ready to spring back or forward in an instant. Sharpe, as I have said, stood right foot foremost, his right arm high up to guard his head; his left ready to dart at his opponent's stomach—for he was a left-handed man, and that was his hitting arm. The Smuggler

took one long, comprehensive glance at his man, then with his head down charged in. Alec kept his right low to guard the mark, and sprang back as the Bishop dashed in. The Smuggler pressed on; Alec hit him a sweet one between the eyes as he raised his head, but Sharpe paid no heed to it—bang went his left at the mark, but Alec's guard was down and stopped it, and quick as thought the Chelsea Snob sent in a nasty upper cut that must have made every tooth in the Bishop's head chatter. But that hardy warrior heeded it not. His eye was bent on the "mark," and his left went straight as a dart for the spot again, only to meet Alec's elbow, and another upper-cut brought the blood in a crimson stream from the Woolwich man's mouth. Still he would not be denied. Suddenly changing his tactics, he brought his right round on Alec's ear, closed with him, and the two rolled over together. The spectators rubbed their hands and said to one another, "This is something like a fight."

The Bishop's cut and swollen mouth showed that Alec's knuckles had come into violent

collision with that part of Sharpe's anatomy, but there was a lump, too, under Reid's left ear which indicated that the Snob had not come off scatheless. The second round was very much like the first, except that Sharpe used his right more, in fact only made one try at the "mark" with his left, which Alec stopped with his elbow guard. Once Sharpe did rather a smart thing. He fainted at the stomach, and as Alec dropped his elbow he, quick as thought, sent his left straight in Reid's face, and followed it up with a half-round one on the side of the head which very nearly knocked the Chelsea Snob off his perch. But Alec quickly righted himself and gave his man two such stinging upper-cuts, as he rushed in head down, that even the indomitable Smuggler was staggered and fell back, wiping the blood from his nose and mouth with the back of his hand. For half a minute or more the Bishop showed no inclination to return to the charge, and when at last he did so he made no attempt to hit, but tried to close with his man. Alec, however, punished him so mercilessly that the Bishop let go his

hold and went down. The Chelsea Snob's friends were delighted, for the swiftness and severity of Alec's hitting seemed to half paralyse the Bold Smuggler, who apparently lost heart as he found that he could not get home his favourite blow.

But the Bishop was a glutton for punishment. Over and over again he dashed in, still hammering at the mark, regardless of upper-cuts, occasionally varying the proceedings with a heavy round-hander from his right, for which Alec was seldom prepared, all his thoughts being centered on defending the spot at which Sharpe's most dangerous blows were aimed. The lump under Alec's left ear began to swell visibly, and though his face was scatheless, there were red patches about his ribs, which showed that *some* of the Bishop's body blows, at anyrate, had gone home. The Bold Smuggler's hard, close-grained skin did not show as much sign of punishment as might have been expected from the frequency and severity of Alec's facers, but his mouth was badly swollen and all awry.

Still there was no diminution in the fury of the Bishop's assaults, and when four-and-twenty minutes had elapsed it was anybody's battle. Old stagers said it was a case of whose strength would last the longer—whether Sharpe would tire of attacking, or Reid of defending the sooner. In any event the fight would certainly last an hour or more. That was what everyone thought when the men came up for the twentieth round, little dreaming of the sensation that was in store for them. With a shake of the head, as if to clear his sight, the Bishop dashed in—and then, how it happened no one could tell—Alec was just a hundredth part of a second too late with his elbow—the Bold Smuggler's deadly left, with all his force behind it, went straight into the "mark." Alec's hands dropped, his head sank forward, his body doubled up, he fell like a log and fainted dead away. It was all over. The Bishop had got home at last, and for half an hour afterwards his beaten foe was writhing in agony.

Alec, however, vowed to have his revenge.

He bided his time and it came. Two years later, on the 15th of July 1828, the rivals met again. I have no space to tell the thrilling story of that fight here. It must suffice to say that, after striving heroically but vainly for more than an hour and a half to get home his fatal blow, the Bishop, for the first and only time in his life, had to acknowledge himself beaten.

VI

JEM WARD

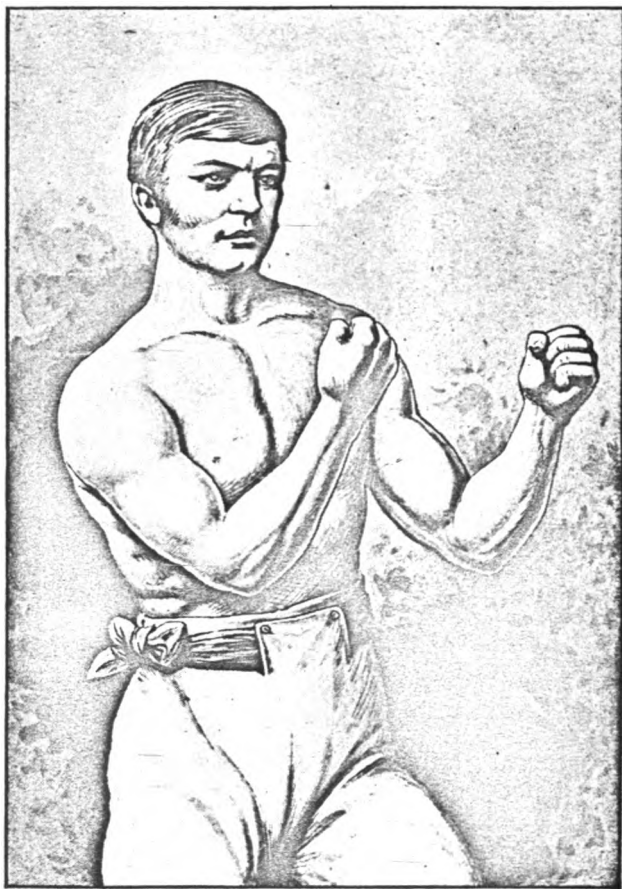
"PLEASE, sir, Mr James Ward to see you."

I was sitting at dinner in the bosom of my family one Sunday afternoon when the door opened and the servant made that announcement. I jumped up and said,—

"Oh! yes, of course. I asked him to—"

"My dear," interrupted my wife with impressive sternness, "if it's that dreadful prize-fighter you spoke of, I *beg* you won't ask the horrid man in *here*. For the sake of the children, I really *must* draw the line."

"Calm yourself, my dear," I replied. "I had no intention of inflicting the company of my old friend, Jem Ward, upon *you*. Your feelings shall not be outraged. Show



JEM WARD.

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Mr Ward into my study, Mary, and say I will be with him in an instant."

Having comfortably settled Jem with a glass of sherry and a cigar—the only form in which he took alcohol and tobacco—I was soon engrossed in listening to his yarns of old battles, told with much dramatic power. Presently Jem said, "But you're married now, aren't you?" for we had not seen much of one another for some years.

"Yes," I replied.

"I should like to see the missus," quoth he.

"You shall," I said, chuckling at the surprise in store for my better half.

Just then the door of my sanctum opened, and my three-year-old son, the youngest of the family, now a six-foot colonist, appeared.

"Come here, young man," said Jem, "and have your first lesson in sparring."

The child looked fearlessly into Jem's bright blue-grey eyes, liked what he saw there, and allowed himself to be placed between Jem's knees whilst his tiny fists

were doubled and his arms fixed in correct fighting attitude.

Then the veteran gladiator, after a playful spar, said,—

“There! young sir, you can boast when you’re grown up that you had your first lesson in sparring from Jem Ward, the old Champion of England.”

“Now take Mr Ward to your mother,” said I.

And the old prize-fighter, with the little child’s hand in his, was ushered into my wife’s presence. I shall never forget the look of astonishment on her face as I introduced “Mr James Ward, late Champion of England.”

I can see Jem in my mind’s eye now as he stood there, straight as a dart for all his eighty years, with his fine face, white hair, and closely-clipped military moustache, looking like some veteran officer of the old school, but no more like the common idea of a prize-fighter than—I to Hercules.

When I came back from seeing Jem off

by 'bus to Holborn, my wife said to me,—

“Do you mean to tell me that that handsome, pleasant, intelligent old gentleman has been a prize-fighter?”

“I do.”

“Well, I should never have thought it. I should certainly have taken him for a retired colonel.”

When next the old Champion came he was an honoured guest, and was specially invited by the lady of the house to have afternoon tea in the drawing-room.

I think this anecdote will convey a better idea of what Jem Ward was in appearance and manners than any mere abstract enumeration of his personal qualities.

Jem had an excellent memory, and up to the very day of his death, at the age of eighty-four, could give vivid narratives, not only of his own exploits and adventures, but of those of his contemporaries in the ring sixty years before. I am indebted to Jem Ward for many of the pugilistic yarns I have spun here. One of the stories which

he loved to tell was that of his fight with Joe Rickens at Bath Races.

Jem Ward was at that time under a cloud. He had jumped suddenly into fame as a brilliant and promising fighter by his victory over Dick Acton in 1822, followed quickly by his easy win over Jack Burke, of Woolwich. Good critics declared that he was a second Jem Belcher. But he utterly ruined his prospects by his extraordinary conduct in his fight with Bill Abbott on October 22, 1822. Abbott was a mere plaything in the hands of the accomplished "Black Diamond," as Ward was called, from the fact of his having been a coal-whipper. Jem banged him about the ring and cross-buttocked him at his pleasure till he had done enough to prove his skill; then, in accordance with his instructions, he let Abbott win—dropped his hands, and actually was heard to say, "Now, Bill, look sharp, hit me and I'll go down." Bill did hit him, and Jem went off in a pretended swoon. This was too transparent—the swindle was too palpable. Ward's backers

refused to pay their debts. An inquiry was held by the Pugilistic Club. Ward confessed that he had been paid £100 to lose, and was expelled, consequently, from the club, and debarred from fighting in any ring over which the Pugilistic Club had control—a sentence which had a similar effect to being “warned off” Newmarket Heath by the Jockey Club nowadays.

But Jem had a chance of showing what he could do on February 4, 1823, when, after a big fight, a purse of £5 was offered for competition. Ned Baldwin, the celebrated “White-headed Bob,” chucked his hat into the ring, and Jem took up the gauntlet. In twenty minutes he knocked Baldwin out of time, and pocketed the fiver without a scratch. But though this was an indisputable proof of his cleverness, it was not accepted as an atonement for his dishonesty. So Jem, finding that the doors of preferment in the P.R. were closed against him in London, went off with a couple of pals, George Weston and Maurice Delay, in search of adventures in the provinces. They “padded

the hoof" down to Bath, and arrived there the day before the races.

Now, of course, it was useless Jem Ward's appearing in his own person, no one would have taken him on if it were known that he was the notorious "Black Diamond" from London. So his friends resorted to a trick to get a match on for him. They dressed him up in a smock frock, and he passed for Sawney Wilson, a simple young countryman from the north. Two or three Sheeny sportsmen down for the races were in the secret, and agreed to find the money to match Jem against a big fellow named Joe Rickens, who called himself the "Champion of Somerset." This Rickens was an ivory and hard-wood turner in Bath, and had been a trooper in the Blues. He stood 6ft. 2in., and being a powerful, courageous man, and a tremendously hard hitter, had vanquished all the local talent, and was regarded as invincible. There was a purse of 20 guineas offered for competition at the races, open to be fought for by all

comers. Jem Ward, who acted the part of the simple yokel Sawney Wilson to perfection, was heard to say in the Castle and Bell that he'd "loike to have a troy for the braass," and when told that he would have to fight the Somerset champion for the purse, said that he "warn't afeard o' no man." This was reported to Rickens, who promptly walked over to the Castle and Bell to interview the audacious yokel. Sawney Wilson, in his smock, with stupid, innocent face, was drinking his beer when Rickens strode in.

"My lad, I'm towld thou'st zed that thou'lt foight Rickens?"

"Yes, sir, I'm not particular," said Sawney, modestly.

"Wilt tha foight me?"

"No, sur; you be too big a man fur me."

"Ha! ha! I thought so. Well, I'm Rickens, and I guess tha doesn't care to take me on."

"Well, sir," said Sawney, scratching his head, and looking *very* innocent, "ye see, I've promised these gents 'ere to fight, and I

suppose I must fight ye, though I don't like the job."

"By God tha *shalt* fight," replied Rickens, and planked £20.

Sawney's friends produced a similar amount, and it was arranged that the men should fight the next day, after the races, for £20 a-side, and the purse of 20 guineas.

How old Jem used to laugh as he told the story! He went into the ring just as he was, smock and all, pretended he didn't know he had to strip, and kept his corduroys and big clumsy boots on, even after he pulled off his shirt. At first the betting was 5 to 1 on the Somerset champion, and Jem has often told me that he nearly lost the fight by fooling too much, for Rickens got in an awful round-hander on the side of the head which precious nearly knocked Jem down, and if it had caught him on the side of the temple or under the ear might have knocked him out. Rickens then rushed on his fate. For, with his head still buzzing from that nasty clout, Jem thought it time to teach the big man a

lesson; so when the latter came on, Jem gave him such a left-hander on the tip of the nose as fairly astonished Rickens; but it was only a sample of what Sawney had in store for him. The spectators, to their amazement, saw their huge champion—who had never yet known defeat—hit clean off his feet by the terrific blows of this unknown north country yokel. Soon the rumour spread that this was no simple chaw-bacon, but the celebrated “Black Diamond” from London. Rickens, however, was game.

“Look ’ere,” he said to Ward, “they tells me thou’rt the ‘Lunnon Black Diamond.’ Well, dang thee, coom on an’ lick me; thou’st got to do it, mind. Let’s zee what thee canst do, and no more danged play-actin’.” Well, *then*, Jem *did* show Mr Rickens what he could do, and electrified him and everybody else by the swiftness and severity of his blows. After a quarter of an hour of such milling as he had never had in his life before, the Somerset champion, blinded, bruised and bleeding, gave in.

The news of this exploit reached London, and metropolitan ring-goers began to express a wish to see this wonderfully clever "Black Diamond" perform in the Prize Ring again. Jem had expressed proper contrition and penitence for his backsliding, had solemnly promised never to offend again, and left the impression that his cross with Abbott was really only the fault of a very young and simple fellow, tempted by astute rascals who had been too persuasive. So Jem Ward found backers to stand by him, and the Pugilistic Club expressed their willingness to overlook his past misconduct, and give him another chance.

Friends came forward and backed him for £100 against Josh Hudson. Now, I have always believed that Ward's backers were playing a deep game, for had Jem chosen I am certain he could have licked Hudson in less time than Cannon did. As a matter of fact, however, Josh licked him, though the winner was far the more severely punished of the two, and, indeed, within five minutes

of the finish it was any odds on Ward. Jem himself has assured me that a sudden attack of sickness took all the fight out of him just as he was winning. It is odd, however, that he should never have challenged Hudson to a second trial. He took on Phil Sampson instead. Phil had twice been beaten by Josh, so he and Ward were in the same boat. But Jem retrieved his reputation by thrashing Sampson in forty-eight minutes. Phil, however, was not satisfied, and they fought again six months later. Once more Ward was victorious in thirty-seven and a half minutes. And then came his challenge to Cannon.

Now Tom Cannon, commonly called "The Great Gun of Windsor," grand-uncle of Mornington, the jockey, had the good fortune to fall in with one of those gentlemen whom the late Tichborne Claimant described as "them as has money and no brains." Tom's patron was the notorious Squire Hayne, of Burderup Park, Wiltshire, generally known as "Pea-green Hayne," partly because he usually wore a coat of that colour, and partly because his character was essentially verdant. Squire Hayne was the

hero of a celebrated breach of promise case, in which Maria Foote, the eminent actress, afterwards Countess of Harrington, was the plaintiff. She was then the mistress of Colonel Berkeley, by whom she had had two or three children, but the young Squire of Burderup was not particular, and made her an offer of marriage which she accepted. Then dimly perceiving that he had made a fool of himself, he tried to back out of the engagement, with the result that she sued him and got £3000 damages.

The "Pea-green" Squire had supreme faith in Tom Cannon, not only as a bruiser, but as an all-round athlete; indeed, Tom as a runner, jumper and wrestler would have been hard to beat. Mr Hayne also believed enthusiastically in Jonathan Kentfield, the great professional billiard player, the John Roberts of his day. Knowing this, a notorious Irish sharper at Brighton, named Carney, got a rare rise out of the "Pea-green" hero. He laid Hayne a wager of £200 that he could not find a man who would throw him (Carney) two falls out of three, fair collar and elbow

wrestling, or give him 70 out of 100 points at billiards. Hayne, who was three sheets in the wind at the time, jumped at the bet, for he was quite sure that Cannon could throw any man breathing, and that Kentfield could give 70 out of 100 to any amateur in the world. Unfortunately, the Squire made the bet without consulting either Tom or Jonathan. Cannon knew nothing whatever about collar and elbow wrestling, and was easily thrown by the athletic Irishman, who had been used to that style of wrestling from his boyhood. Whilst Jonathan Kentfield, had he been consulted, could have told the foolish Squire that Carney was a noted billiard-sharp, to whom 40 in 100 would have been liberal odds, even from such a master of the game as the great Jonathan. Of course, Carney won both events.

But Mr Hayne thought none the worse of Cannon because he had failed at collar and elbow wrestling, for Tom had won him a pot of money in the Prize Ring. "The Great Gun of Windsor," at the close of the year 1824, was considered by many to be virtually

Champion of England. And yet his record was not a very startling one. Seven years previously he had made his first appearance in the ring as the opponent of Dolly Smith. Up to that time Cannon, though he had a great reputation as a fighter among his brother bargees on the river and along the canals, had not fought any professional boxer. Dolly Smith was an ostler or horse-waterer at Hammersmith, and though several inches shorter than Cannon, who stood not far short of 6ft., was not more than half a stone lighter. His science, it was thought, far more than compensated for his inferiority in size, and for the first half-hour of the fight Dolly certainly had the best of it, and punished his big, clumsy antagonist fearfully. But the "Great Gun" was game, and, having the better constitution, outlasted his adversary, and thrashed him in a little over an hour. That fight took place on May 6, 1817, and it was not until June 23, 1824, that Cannon was again seen stripped in the ring. This time he was opposed to a celebrated boxer, Josh Hudson, the John Bull Fighter, for £100

a-side, and by his terrific slogging knocked Josh, who was as fat as a porpoise, out of time in twenty minutes. The John Bull Fighter and his friends, however, were by no means satisfied with the result of the battle, and a second match was made for the big stake of £500 a-side. The fight came off on a wooden stage at Warwick on November 23, 1824, in the presence of an immense crowd. It was fiercely contested, for both were hard hitters, who went in for the hammer-and-tongs style of milling. But Cannon hit hardest and straightest, and again thrashed Hudson in exactly the same time—twenty minutes.

After this Tom promised Mr Hayne he would fight no more, and settled down to his duties as gamekeeper. But when Tom Spring formally retired from the Prize Ring at the close of 1824 and resigned the Championship, Jem Ward promptly challenged Cannon to fight him for £500 a-side and the belt. This was too tempting an offer to be refused, and Tom, with the sanction of Mr Hayne, accepted the challenge, for both of

them thought the £1000 was a gift to Cannon. And so, on public form, it should have been, for Tom had twice licked Josh Hudson with comparative ease in twenty minutes each time, and Josh had thrashed Ward in thirty-six minutes.

There was a prevailing opinion, too, that clever as Jem undoubtedly was, he had no heart, and that before a big, resolute, hard-hitting man like Tom of Windsor, he would show the white feather. Moreover, those who believed in public form could not get over the fact that Cannon had twice defeated the man who had *to all appearance* decisively thrashed Ward. But the knowing ones from the first backed Jem at 5 to 4. Cannon was so certain of winning that he put down £200 of his £500 himself, and had bets to double that amount—in fact, invested all his savings on the issue. With his patron, Squire Hayne, he went off to train at Henley, whilst Ward took his breathings near York. The excitement over the battle was tremendous, for the Championship of England depended on the result.

Warwick was chosen as the scene of action, and seldom has the old Midland town witnessed such a scene of bustle and excitement as it did on the two days preceding the battle. The coaches from north and south were laden with sportsmen eager to see the great fight. Every inn was crammed, and on the eve of the combat there was hardly a bed to be got for love or money in Warwick. The tradesmen and lodging-house keepers made a tremendous haul. Fortunately, the Mayor was a sporting man, and he gave his consent to a stage being erected in a huge enclosed space attached to a factory. The enclosure, it was stated, would hold 10,000 people, and as it could only be entered by two gates, the speculators expected that there would be a rare harvest from gate money, a shilling a head being the price of admission.

At the last moment, however, pressure was put upon the Mayor to forbid the fight within his jurisdiction. In apprehension of such an event, a second stage had been erected on the racecourse, in front of the grand stand, which was outside the Mayor's

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control. And it was here that it was finally decided to bring off the fight. Upwards of 12,000 people were gathered round the stage before eleven o'clock on the morning of July 19, 1825. The grand stand was packed with sightseers who had paid five shillings and half-a-crown a-piece for their seats. It was not till noon that the combatants appeared on the stage. Cannon was attended by Tom Spring and Tom Cribb; Ward was waited on by Tom Oliver and Jack Randall. The heat was terrific; indeed, it was the hottest day that had been known in the Midlands for many a year. The thermometer stood at 92 in the shade, and out on the exposed stage it must have been 120. The "toffs" had assembled in great force. Sir John Radford and Mr Mann, both well-known and wealthy sportsmen, acted as umpires, and the referee was none other than Mr George Osbaldeston, "the Old Squire," the finest all-round sportsman of his own or any other age, whose fame was world-wide.

Cannon, who was now five-and-thirty years

of age, looked old and stale. He had lost the ruddy, healthy look which had marked him when he fought Hudson. Still his condition was good, and he was unquestionably a fine, big, powerful man. Jem Ward was a picture of perfect manhood. I doubt whether a more splendidly-made man has ever been seen in the ring. He stood 5ft. 9½in., and weighed 12st. 7lb. His chest was magnificent, his limbs muscular, and beautifully shaped. There was about an inch and a half difference in favour of Cannon, but I should say that Jem was the heavier of the two, and he was besides in the prime of manhood—just five-and-twenty—ten years younger than Cannon.

Tom, ever a quick fighter, lost no time in leading off, but Jem stopped him prettily, and jobbed him cleverly over his guard, first with the right then with the left. A big lump rose under Tom's left eye, but he rushed in dauntlessly. Jem let him come, fibbed him merrily at half-arm, then gave him the leg, and threw him heavily on the hard boards.

So fearful was the heat that the sweat streamed down the faces of both men, and their bodies glistened as if they had been rubbed with oil. Cannon, already shaken by the first fall, and half-dazed by the scorching sun, dashed in, but hit wildly. Jem propped him prettily, and in the close both came down, Cannon undermost.

No round lasted much more than a minute, for the heat took the starch out of both men. A wild rush from Tom—both hands slung out anywhere—a couple of quick jobbing hits from Jem, then a close, and down they went on the boards.

In the sixth round, however, Tom got home a very heavy right-hander on the side of the head, and Jem promptly went down as if he didn't like it. In the next round, despite two slashing hits in the face, Cannon closed and threw Ward heavily. Then some speculators were very anxious to get on at 5 to 4, and several bets of £15 to £10 against Cannon were booked. But in the following round Jem not only gave Tom a snorter on the point of the

nose, which brought the blood out in a jet, but threw him and fell on him. That fall was fatal to Cannon, who was already nearly done up by the blistering heat. But, though he came up groggy and dazed, Jem was unable to take advantage of the opportunity, for he was nearly as bad himself. There the two of them stood panting, with their mouths open, their hands at their sides, the sweat literally running off them in streams. At last Cannon lurched forward, and made an attempt to hit. Jem jobbed him in the face. Down went the "Great Gun," and Jem fell helpless and exhausted by his side. It seemed that one or other, or both of them, would be smitten down by sunstroke. Ward, however, appeared to shake off the effects of the heat sooner than his opponent, and when Cannon came up for the tenth round—panting, puffing, sweating, staggering—Jem slipped into him without a moment's delay, and hit him right and left in the face. Tom tottered for a moment, then fell with a crash on the boards, where he lay senseless, with

the blood gushing from his mouth, nose and ears. Ward looked at him for a moment, then reeled, and would have fallen if Tom Oliver had not caught him in his arms. When "Time" was called, Ward's seconds succeeded in getting him on his feet; but Jem has told me himself that he didn't believe he could have walked to the scratch. Fortunately there was no need for him to make the effort, for Cannon was still insensible, and remained so for half an hour, though a surgeon who was present bled him, and did all he could to restore consciousness. Finally Tom was lifted into Mr Hayne's carriage and driven to an hotel in Warwick, where he was put to bed, and the next day he was all right.

The actual time occupied in fighting had been only ten minutes, but the wonder is that both men were not struck down by the sun before even that short time had elapsed. Jem Ward was carried off the stage, and has often told me that he never went through such suffering in his life as

he did on that awful July day, when he won the Championship of England.

I have no space here to dwell upon Jem Ward's subsequent battles. It must suffice to say that, with the exception of Peter Crawley, no one ever beat him, and most good judges were of opinion that if the men had fought a second time Jem would have turned the tables on his ponderous foe. Jem Ward's last fight was with Simon Byrne, "the Emerald Gem," whom he decisively defeated on the 12th of July 1831. After that he paid a short visit to the United States, where he had a very hospitable reception, and on his return settled down as a publican at Liverpool.

In some respects I consider my old friend Jem Ward the most remarkable man that the Prize Ring has ever produced. As a boxer I should say that he has hardly had an equal, certainly not a superior. I saw him, at the age of sixty, with the gloves defeat the most accomplished and fashionable professor of the day, a man not half his age, and Jem's cleverness and activity on that

occasion astonished all beholders. His detractors said that he lacked courage, and that he was afraid to tackle Deaf Burke. But they forgot that Burke was ten years younger than Ward, and that Jem was comfortably settled in business when the Deaf Un challenged him, hence his refusal to fight for less than £500 a-side. That Burke, brave, dogged, hard-grained warrior though he was, would have stood any chance against Jem Ward I do not believe for a moment.

But there was another side to Jem Ward's character. He was not only a brilliant pugilist, he was also a musician of no mean order, and, above all, a painter of distinct and undeniable merit. There was an exhibition of his pictures once at Liverpool, and another in London, which attracted considerable attention. But I will let an eminent Royal Academician, the late Henry Stacey Marks, be the critic of Jem Ward's artistic pretensions. He thus describes a visit to the studio of the painter-pugilist:—

“In the far East, in the unsavoury locality known as the Whitechapel Road, stands a

small public-house. A huge red lamp which hangs over the doorway proclaims it to be the King's Arms, or more familiarly, 'Jem Ward's.' Pushing aside the door, the host is discovered standing behind the bar, dispensing beer and gin to customers whose apparel is not clean, and whose diction is strong. His appearance is not altogether refined, and has more of the aspect of the ordinary prize-fighter. The head is broad, massive and powerful, and the expression of the face honest, simple and intelligent. Your errand stated, you are ushered by 'Jem' up an awkward staircase into a parlour of dingy aspect, smelling somewhat strongly of stale tobacco smoke. The low ceiling is blackened with the fumes of the gas-jets. Around the walls are hung some eight or ten of the proprietor's *chef-d'œuvres* in gilt frames as fly-bitten as the walls on which they hang. Other pictures in various states of progress are stowed away in odd nooks, their faces to the wall. A bench runs along one side of the apartment, the furniture of which is coarse and

common, with the exception of a rosewood piano belonging to the painter's daughter, a pupil of Benedict's, and a pianiste, I believe, of some celebrity. Such is the studio of Jem Ward. A strange home for the arts it is in the midst of the ceaseless roar of the carts and omnibuses, the continual cry of costermongers and hawkers, and the frequent din of drunken squabbles. Jem is his own showman, and considerately saves his visitors the trouble of venturing any remarks upon his pictures by criticising them himself. Diffidence is evidently a word of the meaning of which he is ignorant, and any tribute of praise that may be awarded to his work is accepted not as a compliment, but as a king accepts the homage of a subject. In his own opinion, few men, if any, have the advantage of him either as a painter or connoisseur. To quote his own words, 'he can do all that Turner could in colour and "atmosphere,"' which he considered his *forte*, though he confesses that Turner surpassed him in 'detail.'

"I had no opportunity of testing the accuracy of the ex-Champion's opinions as to the facility he enjoyed in flesh painting, no portraits or figure subjects by him being in the house at that time. A coarse-coloured lithograph from a picture he painted of the fight between Sayers and Heenan hangs in the bar; but this, of course, only gives an idea of the arrangement of the figures. The original was painted in opposition to the representation of the 'great event' published by Mr Newbold, the cheap printseller in the Strand. Jem Ward's version has, at least, this advantage over its rival, that the figures it contains are, for the most part, directing their attention to the main business in hand, while in the Newbold print at least half the spectators are turning their backs on the contest, and testify utter indifference as to its result by glaring out of the picture with most unprofessional concern. I saw ample evidences of his artistic faculty. His pictures are painted with great solidity, firmness, and a reckless

power of hand, such as one might expect from a practised bruiser. They display a strong appreciation of colour—not true colour, perhaps, in many cases, but often beautiful in itself—and though frequently strong and brilliant, in no one instance does it betray the slightest suspicion of *vulgarity*. ‘Here,’ said he, turning a picture from the wall, placing it in a favourable light, and rubbing his moistened hand over parts that had lost their richness—‘here’s colour if you like; no one can beat that—it’s soft and blooming like a peach. All done with the palette knife. Here’s a pair now, just begun; the foundations laid, you may call it. Don’t know what I shall do with ’em yet, no more than a baby. When an idea strikes me, I shall take ’em up, and put in my detail. Some little cattle on the hills here, perhaps a figure or two, and there you are. I could knock off a couple of pair of them in a week if I’d only time, but when you’re in business you’re always being called off, you lose your idea, and then you’re done. Sunday

morning's about the only time I can get to work. I sit down here with my colours on a large slab (don't use a palette), put my canvas on the back of that old chair, mix up the paint till I get a nice bit of colour, and then it goes on with the palette knife. Never mix the colours much; if you do you can't get richness or transparency; the fewer the colours the better.' In this last sentence it will be observed that Mr Ward echoes unconsciously, perhaps, the precepts of the old Venetian masters."

I have said that Jem was also a musician. As a violinist he was far above the average of amateurs, and he was scarcely less proficient on the flute. He had a fine baritone voice, too, and exercised it with remarkable effect. His daughter, Eleanor Ward, inherited her father's musical talents, and was one of Sir Julius Benedict's best pupils. Her annual concerts at the Eyre Arms, St John's Wood, always drew large audiences. She subsequently became the wife of

the well-known Superintendent Mott of Scotland Yard.

Hale, hearty and vigorous to the last, Jem Ward lived to the ripe age of eighty-four. He died on the 3rd of April 1884.



OWEN SWIFT.

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OWEN SWIFT

IN the year 1837 Owen Swift was, by common consent, the Light-Weight Champion of England. He had fought fourteen great battles and had only lost two, and in each of these cases he was matched against a man far heavier and stronger than himself. Owen was a most precocious youngster. He was only fifteen when he made his *début* in the P.R., and thrashed the afterwards well-known Tom M'Keevor, who was three years older, and a stone and a half heavier than himself, and he fought no less than eleven battles before he was twenty. But it was cruel of his friends to match him at the age of sixteen against such a man as Tom Smith, the East End Sailor Boy, who weighed close upon 2st.

more than Owen, and was three-and-twenty years of age—a hardy, resolute, clever fighter, too, who, at his best, could find no one in England to beat him. No wonder that little Owen was licked. Still less wonderful was it that Swift should have failed when matched against the famous Hammer Lane, of Birmingham, a powerful 11st. man and a most terrific hitter, standing more than 3 in. higher than Swift, and scaling 10st. 10lb. on the day of the fight against the little Londoner's 9st. The odds in height, weight and strength were too great even for Owen's matchless science. Yet for upwards of two hours the little man stood up to the terrible Hammer, inflicted severe punishment, and only gave in when Nature completely deserted him and he could fight no more. Those were the only defeats that Owen Swift ever met with in his brilliant ten years as a bruiser, and, after his two hard-won victories over Anthony Noon and his splendid triumph over Izzy Lazarus, a clever, strong, active fighter, a good 10lb. heavier than Owen, it was evident that there was no man under 10st. in England

who could stand up against the little 9st. Londoner with the ghost of a chance of success.

It was, therefore, with unqualified surprise that the sporting world received the announcement of a challenge to Swift from an almost unknown outsider—one William Phelps, or Phillips, or Brighton Bill as his friends called him.

To London ring-goers Phelps was known only as the conqueror of Tom Smith, the East End Sailor Boy, whom Bill licked in a fight for £15 a-side on December 29, 1837. But Tom Smith was then on the downward grade. Drink and dissipation had ruined his once splendid physique, and the athletic, healthy young countryman knocked him out of time in twenty-five minutes. In Brighton, however, Phelps had a considerable reputation as a successful and a formidable boxer. It is a curious fact that in one of Bill's early fights at Brighton he killed his opponent, George Daniels, a painter, but was fortunate enough to be acquitted when tried for manslaughter at Lewes Assizes. I learned this

from his brother Joe, the opponent of Alec Keene and Sam Martin, whom I knew well, and who also told me that William was so cut up by the death of Daniels that he vowed he would never fight again. But it was the old, old story—

“When the Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be;

When the Devil was well, the devil a monk was he.”

And as soon as the feeling of remorse had worn off, William Phelps chucked his vows to the winds and let his natural love of fighting assert itself.

At first no one believed that the Brightonian meant business; but it soon transpired that he did, and that he had a strong following in the East End who were ready and willing to back him for any amount against the crack light-weight of the West End. The men were matched for £50 a-side, and both went into hard training for the event—Swift at Newmarket, with his old pal, Young Dutch Sam, to look

after him; Phelps at Northfleet, under old Tom Owen ("The Sage of the East") and the celebrated Dick Curtis.

The 13th of March 1838 was the day fixed for the mill, and Swift, who won the toss for choice of place, selected Royston, thirteen miles from Cambridge.

Tom Cross, the "literary dragsman," in his *Autobiography of a Stage Coachman* gives the following remarkable incident:—

"It was on a morning preceding the day on which a long-expected battle was to come off that I was directed by my waybill to take up three persons at the Cherry Tree, Kingsland Road. I had three other insides, one a young and beautiful lady, whose husband, a clergyman, was my companion on the box. Before I got to the Stone's end, a gentleman on the roof said, 'You have got some fighting men going down with you.'

"'Have I?' I replied carelessly; but the gentleman on the box, pricking up his ears, said he would not allow any such

characters to sit in the coach with his wife.

"Pulling up, for my three customers were waiting, and, while telling my box companion that I had no power to exclude anyone, on account of his profession, from the coach, who had taken his seat, his mind was set at rest by two coarse-looking fellows, in rough great-coats, getting on the outside, and a well-dressed, genteel-looking young man getting in. In this way we travelled to our place of refreshment, the husband looking in when we changed horses to see that all was right.

"On his assisting her out (they had not been long married) she asked him who was the gentleman who got in last, for his conversation had been extremely interesting, and she was sure, by his general information, he must be a gentleman of distinction at the university.

"The individual referred to entered the luncheon-room alone, dressed in an elegant suit of black, sat down at the table, and displayed on his delicate white hand a

ring in which was set a valuable diamond. His manners corresponded with his appearance, and no one could have suspected him of being a fighting man.

“Reader, this was a man known as Brighton Bill—his real name I never knew—but that he was of respectable parents, and intended by them for a better calling, I was convinced. When, two days afterwards, I saw his contused and distorted countenance, the only part visible from under the bedclothes, in the Wheatsheaf at Buckway, when he was deserted by all, and had no friend or relative near to watch over his fast-departing spirit, I could not restrain a tear.”

I give this as a specimen of the sort of maudlin nonsense which has been written about the Prize Ring. Anyone who knew Brighton Bill must have roared with laughter at that picture of the elegantly-dressed young exquisite with the delicate white hand and diamond ring! And yet I suppose Tom Cross thought he was telling the truth. Let us charitably hope that

it was his memory which played him false.

It was a dull, cloudy morning, with a thin, drizzling rain, to render the prospect more depressing, when the drags, carriages, gigs and vehicles of all sorts and sizes, began to gather on Melbourn Heath, about a mile from Royston. Half the undergraduates from Cambridge were there, and no end of swells from London, besides squires and farmers from the neighbourhood—a goodly company. The weather began to clear at noon, and at one o'clock, when the men, amid tremendous cheering, entered the ring, the rain had ceased and there was every prospect of a fine, though sunless, afternoon.

Swift was seconded by Young Dutch Sam and Frank Redmond, whom many readers will, I daresay, remember as host of the Swiss Cottage, and one of the best dog fanciers in England. Brighton Bill was waited on by Dick Curtis, king of seconds, and Jem Brown, "The Go-Cart Man." Phelps stood 5ft. 7½in., and scaled 9st. 11lb.

Swift's height was 5ft. 6in., and his weight exactly 9st. The Brightonian, therefore, had considerable physical advantages. He was a fresh-complexioned, boyish-looking fellow, with a good, rosy, open, honest face—the picture of health—a marked contrast to the pale, thin visage of the Londoner, who looked as if late hours and hard living had been playing the deuce with his constitution. Owen's lean, lathy frame, too, seemed slight by contrast with the broad, thick-set, muscular body of his adversary. But a close inspection would have shown that Swift was a far more formidable customer than he looked at first sight. Every muscle in his graceful, symmetrical form was fully developed. He was all wire and whipcord, with well-knit shoulders, from which his blows came like stones from a catapult, whilst his bright, sparkling, fearless eye told of courage and intelligence.

Swift's backers trusted to his matchless ring-craft to pull him through. The supporters of Phelps believed that their man's gameness, strength, and sound constitution

would enable him to wear Swift out. Owen himself was well aware that he had a hard nut to crack. Whilst his seconds were peeling him, he said to Young Dutch Sam,—

“Sam, his eye looks like pluck, and he’s as strong as a bullock. I shall have a long job, and I shall want every ounce of strength, and you must save me from the beginning. Carry me to the scratch after every round, and never leave me on my feet a moment longer than is absolutely necessary.”

It must be remembered that the then rules of the ring allowed a man to be carried to the scratch by his seconds; it was not till much later that the law was passed that “each man shall rise from the knee of his bottle-holder and walk to his own side of the scratch *unaided*, the seconds and bottle - holder remaining at their corner.”

It was soon evident that Bill had orders to force the pace. But his rushing game did not meet with much success. Owen

met him with straight jobs from the left in the face, which had the effect of so demoralising Phelps that he frequently hit with his left hand open, and was very wild in his deliveries with the right, which he swung round with great force but little accuracy. First blood, however, was booked to the Brightonian, who landed one of his round right-handers on Swift's mouth. The blow was not severe; but Owen's lips were chapped, and it only wanted a tap to draw the claret. In the fourth round, however, the Londoner had his revenge, for as Bill rushed in Owen met him with right and left on the nose and ripped the skin clean off that feature.

Brighton Bill had a curious habit of opening and shutting his eyes and nodding his head like the old-fashioned figures of Chinese mandarins in tea shops. And this habit bothered Owen a good bit, for once or twice, thinking Bill was badly hurt, he went in rashly, and caught a round-handed smack on the ear which made his head sing. But, so far as ring-

craft was concerned, the Brightonian was a child compared with the wily Owen, who drew his man on artfully and cunningly till Bill fell into the trap laid for him, and dashed in only to be sent back by a hit like the kick of a horse. In the fifth round Bill was caught this way, hurried foolishly after his retreating foe, and got a terrific smack on the jaw, which knocked him clean off his feet.

But Bill didn't seem to mind the knock down a bit, and he was so eager to repay the compliment that his seconds could hardly keep him still till the call of "Time." Curtis had to hold him down to prevent him from rushing to the scratch too soon. Severe and stinging though Owen's jobs in the face were, the Brighton lad took them without flinching, and now and then got in a nasty round-hander with his right on the ear, which made Swift look silly for a moment.

So the fight went on for fifty minutes, and though Phelps was badly punished about the face and bleeding freely, he was still as strong

as a horse and as game as a pheasant, so that no one could say that he had not a fair chance of winning yet by sheer endurance. Then, to the dismay of Swift's backers, the little man fell weak, and complained to Young Dutch Sam that he felt awfully sick. "All right," said Sam, cheerily, "we'll make that all right presently. You go on with your work, and whatever wants taking off I'll clear off for you at the proper time." But Owen was so deathly pale that his friends were seriously alarmed, and when Bill closed and threw him heavily they began to tremble for their money.

Sam, however, by tickling the Londoner's throat with a feather, enabled him to relieve the sickness, and Owen was soon himself again. He quickly paid Bill out for that heavy fall by giving him a shattering cross-buttock, following that up in succeeding rounds with sundry upper-cuts and straight jobs, which made poor Bill's face look very one-sided.

Then Owen fell weak again, and it was Bill's turn to score, which he did by landing

two or three heavy round hits on the side of Swift's head, which shook the "Little Wonder" terribly, and made his left ear swell ominously. But Owen never lost his coolness and judgment. Even when he was weakest, his blows, however feeble, were delivered with mechanical precision, and went straight to their mark; whilst the Brightonian as often as not hit open-handed with his left, and missed with three out of four of his right-hand sweeps.

The way Owen's seconds nursed him was splendid. When "Time" was called they would very gingerly, at a snail's pace, carry their man by the most circuitous route possible to the scratch, and in this way they invariably gained a good half minute. For a long while Phelps refused to let his seconds carry him to the scratch, but at last, as he felt his strength going, he reluctantly consented to follow the example of his artful foe.

So the fight went on for an hour and a quarter. Two more miserable-looking objects than the combatants could not well be imagined. Swift, pale as death, sweating

profusely, his knees quivering and trembling under him, scarcely able to hold up his arms, his mouth open, the left side of his head badly swollen: Phelps with both eyes almost closed, and every feature of his face knocked out of shape, blowing like a grampus, blood and sweat coursing in mingled streams down his bruised cheeks, his forehead one mass of lumps and contusions, his face of a livid, purple hue, suggestive of apoplexy. Could you have a more pitiable spectacle? Neither man could box any longer, it was a mere prolonged test of human endurance. Yet no attempt was made to stop the fight. Not even when Phelps was absolutely helpless and could only just stand with his legs wide apart, his eyes closed, his arms hanging by his side, and breathing like a man in a fit, not even then would his backers allow him to be taken out of the ring. Owen begged Curtis to take his man away, for Bill was now incapable of striking a blow—but Dick refused, still clinging desperately to the hope that Bill might yet pull himself together sufficiently to swing in one random blow that

would knock Owen out of time. After the eightieth round Swift never struck Phelps, but simply pushed him down. Then, at length, after eighty-five rounds had been fought in ninety-five minutes, Curtis threw up the sponge. Owen had just strength enough left to shake hands with his beaten foe, who tried to rise, but fell back senseless into his second's arms. The winner himself fainted a moment later, and was carried insensible to his carriage. Both men were at once put to bed, and the condition of both caused the gravest anxiety to their friends. Owen, however, gradually recovered, and after some terribly anxious hours was pronounced out of danger. But Brighton Bill never rallied. All that medical skill could do for him was done. He was cupped, leeches were applied to his head; but all in vain, and early on the Friday morning he passed peacefully away, without having spoken a word since he fainted in his second's arms. It was the terrible blows on the forehead that caused his death, coupled with the exhaustion consequent upon the cruelly-

prolonged fight. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against Owen Swift and the four seconds. Owen was nearly mad with grief and remorse at thus for the second time causing a man's death, though the blame really rested with the backers and seconds of Brighton Bill, whose persistence in sending their man up long after he was obviously beaten was absolutely inexcusable, and showed a shameful indifference to the dictates of humanity, which I am glad to say was not often a feature of the British Prize Ring.

That was a terrible time for poor Owen, and I have heard him say that his mind was so completely thrown off its balance that more than once he contemplated suicide. You see it was the second time he had caused a man's death in fighting. In 1834 Anthony Noon died from the injuries inflicted upon him by Swift. On that occasion Owen was tried for manslaughter, convicted, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Winchester Gaol. But he could not expect to get off so lightly a second time, and, anticipating a very severe sentence, he

resolved to take refuge in France, whither he and his second immediately fled.

When Swift and Young Dutch Sam arrived in Paris, fugitives from justice, they found Jack Adams established there as the flourishing manager and proprietor of a School of Arms, at which boxing formed a prominent feature. Now Jack was reckoned one of the very best teachers of boxing then living. Moreover, he was a remarkably clever fighter, and had only been twice defeated out of the eight times he had appeared in the ring. His first defeat was at the hands of Tom Smith, whom he afterwards most decisively thrashed, proving that the issue of the previous fight had been a fluke. His only other conqueror had been Hammer Lane, a man far heavier and more powerful than himself. It will be remembered that Owen Swift, too, had tried his hand against Hammer, but the odds of weight, height and strength were too much for the "Little Wonder," and he, too, had to submit to defeat. Of all Owen's contemporaries the one whom most good judges thought the

best match for him was Jack Adams, but the two had never been brought together.

Now, at that time the great leader of sport in Paris was the eccentric Lord Henry Seymour, founder of the French Jockey Club. He was a younger son of the third Marquis of Hertford, but though an Englishman to the backbone in his tastes, pursuits and character, he never once set foot in England. He was born in Paris, and in Paris he died. Lord Henry was immensely wealthy, and did such extraordinary things with his money that he was known wherever he went as "the mad English milord." He was a fine horseman, a splendid shot, a brilliant swordsman, and a first-rate, all-round athlete. Of boxing he was particularly fond, and it was he who had set up Jack Adams in his School of Arms.

But when Owen Swift and Young Dutch Sam appeared upon the scene his lordship transferred a large portion of his patronage to the newcomers, whose names were, of course, familiar to him as those of the two most brilliant and celebrated of living English

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pugilists. Lord Henry Seymour's friends, the Rothschilds, the Duc de Chartres, Captain Gronow, Lord Petersham, the Marquis of Waterford, and a lot of other swells, both French and English, followed that eccentric nobleman's lead, and Owen and Sam soon found themselves in clover, with the pick of the aristocracy as their pupils.

The first exploit which Swift performed was against the crack French professor of the *savate*, Jules Michod.

Lord Henry backed Owen, and the fight came off in Adams's School of Arms. The Frenchman let fly a back kick at Swift at the first go off, but the "Little Wonder" was ready for him, hopped aside with marvellous quickness, and caught his antagonist with his right full on the sole of his foot, sending him down, a purler, on his face. This provoked roars of laughter, which so maddened the Frenchman that he lost his head. Owen dodged his kicks cleverly, and then gave him such a right and left in the face as rolled him over again and knocked all the fight out of him.

The Parisian sportsmen who witnessed this performance expressed a great desire to see Owen fight one of his own countrymen in the English style. But, of course, the difficulty was to find anyone who could stand up to him, for Adams had announced his intention of not fighting any more. There was bad blood, however, between Jack and Owen. Adams was furiously jealous of the "Little Wonder" for coming over and cutting him out in the favour of his Parisian patrons, and he and Young Dutch Sam had already almost come to blows. Sam, however, was too heavy for Jack to tackle with the raw 'uns, but they had some spirited sets-to with the gloves, in which, clever though Sam was, he found that he had all his work cut out to hold his own with Adams."

Owen and Jack, of course, were a better match, and it was hard to tell to which the palm of superiority should be awarded. One evening, however, matters were brought to a climax by Adams declaring that Swift had shifted his glove when sparring, and pointed

to a bruise on his forehead in proof of his assertion that Owen had struck him with his bare hand. Swift indignantly denied the charge, and hot words ensued between them, the end of which was that Adams swore that neither Swift nor Young Dutch Sam should ever darken the doors of his School of Arms again.

But Lord Henry Seymour had a word to say to this. He told Adams plainly that he must do one of two things, either fight Swift or apologise to him, and admit him and Sam as before to the School of Arms. Jack's British blood was up, and he said he'd fight Swift rather than apologise. And so a match between the two was made for £50 a-side.

Early on the morning of June 5, 1838, the cream of the Parisian Fancy drove in their drags and carriages to the Bois de Boulogne to witness a new sensation—new, at anyrate, to most of them—the spectacle of a real English prize fight between two celebrated British boxers. Never before had the green glades of that famous wood beheld

such a scene as they saw that day. A proper 24ft. ring had been pitched by Young Dutch Sam, assisted by some of the lads retained at Adams's School of Arms. There were not above a hundred persons present, but they were all "tip-top toffs"—dukes, counts, barons, and the *elite* of the recently-formed Paris Jockey Club. The *chasseurs*, who had charge of the Bois de Boulogne, were heavily bribed not to interfere, and some of them, in their green uniforms with gilt facings, stood and watched with curious eyes the preparations for the combat.

When the two men stepped out in the early sunlight, and stood up stripped on the green sward, they looked a pair of model athletes. In height they were about equal—each 5ft. 6in., but Adams had considerably the advantage in weight. He scaled upwards of 10st., whilst Swift was nearly a stone less. Jack's swarthy skin and bold, aquiline features gave him an almost gipsy appearance, and, indeed, I believe that he, like Jem Mace, had some Romany blood in his veins. A powerfully-made man was Jack—active, too, and with

a keen, quick, dark eye, which promised both intelligence and alertness. Owen was far less strongly built to outward view, but then his beautifully-proportioned, symmetrical frame was deceptive. Every muscle was strong and springy as steel, and there was terrific hitting power behind those well-knit shoulders, whilst for his size there have been few, if any, cleverer wrestlers than Owen. As they stood up to fight, the attitudes of both were the perfection of artistic beauty, and murmurs of admiration came from all the spectators. Very pretty it was to watch their quick, graceful movements as they played round one another—each ready to duck, dodge or hit in an instant. For several minutes they sparred beautifully, then Jack, who was tired of all this finessing, made his attack, but Owen skipped away, and, coming in again with marvellous celerity, landed his left on Jack's nose. Adams was riled, and pressed his man hard. Owen stood to him, and there was a splendid rally, in which both got home hard, but in the close Swift had the best of it—

gave his man the crook and threw him heavily.

When they came up for the second round Adams looked very savage, but he kept his temper so far that he did nothing rash. He meant mischief, however, and Owen, seeing this, was very wary. At last they came together, and there was a very merry rally, both men drawing blood. Swift, however, scored most points, and Adams fell back. As Owen pressed him Jack went down, and, just as he was falling, Swift let drive, catching his man on the forehead. Adams sprang from the ground and appealed in an excited manner to the umpires and referee. He ought to have waited for his seconds to do this, but they followed suit and backed up his appeal. Jack declared that Owen deliberately struck him when he was down. The umpires could not agree, and the referee, when appealed to in the last resort, hesitated, but finally told the men to fight on. This Adams flatly refused to do. He turned to the spectators, and declared that Owen had tried to spike him

in the first round, and to gouge him when he was down. He let that pass, but he was not going to let the second foul act pass, and he should therefore leave the ring, which he accordingly did, and so the great fight in the Bois de Boulogne came to an end—fizzled out ignominiously. As Adams, however, had distinctly refused to obey the referee's orders to fight, the stakes were awarded to Swift.

This, of course, bred more bad blood between the two men; twice when they met they came to blows, and had to be separated by the bystanders. Finally they agreed to fight again for £50 a-side, Lord Henry Seymour finding the money for Adams and the Marquis of Waterford and Lord Curgenven for Swift. This time they had to be more cautious in selecting a rendezvous, for the French newspapers were up in arms about "this brutal British pastime," and called upon the authorities to repress such horrible barbarity with a strong hand.

Villiers was the spot chosen, and the ring was pitched in the grounds of a shooting-

box rented by the Duke of Hamilton. Both men had trained very carefully for the event, and had probably never been in better condition in their lives than when they stepped into the ring on September 5, 1838. Bendigo and Deaf Burke had been specially retained to come over and act as trainers and seconds.

There is no authentic account of the battle in print, and what I shall here put down I have derived mostly from Owen Swift and Bendigo. This time both men meant business and no mistake. Adams felt that his reputation and with it his position as boss of the School of Arms was at stake. From all accounts Adams fought as well as ever he fought in his life, so far as cleverness went. But I fancy that he was stale, and that after a while all the spring and elasticity went out of him. Owen has often told me that he, for his part, never fought worse in his life. He declared that, do what he would, he could not help thinking of Brighton Bill all the time he was fighting, and the thought of the fine

young fellow whom he had hurried into eternity paralysed his efforts.

For the first part of the battle Jack undoubtedly had the best end of the stick. He gave Owen a rousing black eye in the second round, and threw him three times very heavily in the course of the next half-dozen rounds. Betting was actually 2 to 1 on Adams in the twelfth round, and Owen's listless and spiritless appearance filled his backers with dismay. I have no doubt, from what Owen has told me, that he was labouring under terrible mental depression, and that he would undoubtedly have lost the battle but for Young Dutch Sam, who never wearied in his efforts to cheer up his friend and stimulate him to fight. And at last Owen *did* wake up, and Adams *very* soon knew it. He had taken a lot out of himself, and was not prepared for the sudden and extraordinary change which came over Owen. The "Little Wonder" was himself again, and, though Adams fought desperately to keep the lead he had won, it was all useless.

He was completely outfought and out-generalled, and after an hour and a quarter of hard fighting, he was so severely punished and so utterly exhausted that he had to give in.

But this was not the end of the affair. On the following Friday there appeared in *Galignani's Messenger* — the well-known English journal published in Paris—an article calling upon the French authorities to prosecute the English ruffians who had broken the law, and sternly set their foot upon any attempt to introduce the disgusting blackguardism of the British Prize Ring into France. Several French journals took the matter up in the same spirit, and the Parisian police felt bound to take notice of the affair. Warrants were accordingly issued against the principals and seconds. The latter bolted at once to England. Adams, too, fled in disguise to Havre, and thence by sea to Southampton. Swift, however, dared not go back, and, on the advice of Mons. Lafitte and other leading members of the French Jockey

Club, surrendered. In due course he was brought before the Tribunal of Correctional Police, on a charge of "having inflicted wounds occasioning an incapacity to labour for less than twenty days." The proceedings were so curious that I shall present the reader with a translation of the report contained in one of the leading Parisian newspapers:—

"Paris Tribunal of Correction.—January 5.—We have had cock-fights, steeplechases and the struggles of a representative government; we required but the extraordinary emotions of pugilism to complete our resemblance to our neighbours across the Channel. For this elegant accomplishment we are indebted to the Jockey Club. All Paris remembers the conflict which took place in September at Charenton St Maur. One of the champions, Adams, was severely wounded. A prosecution was issued against one of the combatants; but both being summoned to appear before the Tribunal of Correction this day, have taken French leave, and are not in Court. The King's

Advocate read the examination sustained by the conqueror, Owen Swift. His replies were as follows:—‘My name is Owen Swift, aged twenty-four, born in London, residing in Paris, Passage Tivoli. There was a pugilistic encounter on the 5th of September at Charenton. I was offered 50 louis by some members of the Jockey Club to fight the battle. I don’t know who these persons are, but I have already received 500 francs from Mr Charles Lafitte, who resides in Place Vendôme, No 18. I have, moreover, received £20 from Mr Anthony Rothschild to give him lessons in boxing. It was Burke, an Englishman, who trained me for the fight at a place near a farm belonging to Lord Seymour, at Versailles. The training consisted in retiring to rest and rising early, eating good beef, good mutton, and taking a great deal of exercise. I did not know that such fights were forbidden. It was the second I had fought in France. The first took place at the Bois de Boulogne. The expenses were paid by the Jockey Club. I am mistaken in saying

there had been only one fight before. There had been another one four months before; but Adams and I had wadded gloves. It was Lord Seymour who presided at the first fight. I escaped to France after the fight in which I killed my opponent. I was to have been tried in England at the March Assizes. Adams is now in London.'

"Drake, an Englishman, owner of the inclosure at Charenton, was then questioned by the President. His replies were as follows:—'I did not know that Swift and Adams had come to my premises to fight. They probably came because they knew I was an Englishman. The wager was £100. I saw the latter part of the contest. The parties fought long, but there were twenty-five pauses to enable them to take wind. Adams fell senseless. I believe that some mechanics at Rouen and persons belonging to the Rothschild firm supplied the £100. Adams and Swift had already fought twice together. It is said that Swift has killed three men and won twenty-four fights in England (?). They have both left France

out of fear; Swift had already left England to avoid the Assizes.'

"After Mertol, the rural guard of Charenton, had given in his evidence, and stated that a number of carriages and other fashionable vehicles lined the way to the ground, the Tribunal sentenced Swift and Adams to thirteen months' imprisonment."

The evidence of Mr Drake given above is very funny, surpassing in brazen impudence and sublime disregard of truth even the remarkable statement made by a certain bookmaker, and notorious backer of pugilists who, not many years since, when charged with "assisting at a prize fight," assured the magistrate that he wouldn't knowingly go within a hundred miles of such a degrading exhibition! Owen's description of the course of training which he had to go through had an amusing effect upon the young sporting swells of Paris. For the next fortnight or more these young exquisites might be seen going at their best pace along the streets and boulevards, muffled up to their eyes in sweaters and greatcoats, and to all inquiries

by their amazed friends as to what on earth they were doing in that strange guise, the answer was "*Conditioner pour boxer*" (getting into condition for boxing).

On learning the sentence of the court, Owen hastily quitted Paris, disguised, I believe, as a woman. If he were to be imprisoned at all he preferred the inside of an English gaol to that of a French one, and, flying from the arms of justice abroad, threw himself into the arms of justice at home.

He surrendered to take his trial for the manslaughter of Brighton Bill, and was tried at the Hertford Assizes, February 28, 1839, when the jury acquitted him on the ground that it was not clearly proved that the man died from the effects of the blows received. As soon as he came back to London, Owen repeated to his friends his solemn vow never to fight again in the Prize Ring, and that vow was religiously kept. So, at the early age of twenty-five, the champion light-weight of his time abandoned the profession in which he had played his part with such extraordinary

brilliancy. A prettier fighter was never, perhaps, seen in the Ring during the hundred and fifty years of its history. His style was to a great extent—like that of Jem Ward, Jem Belcher and other great pugilists—his own; but in some important respects it resembled that of Dick Curtis, the Pet of the Fancy. Owen, like the Pet, was remarkable for his marvellous quickness and precision in the use of the left, on which he mainly relied, whilst he was so wonderfully active on his legs that, after delivering a blow, he was away out of danger before his adversary could touch him. At in-fighting he was equally good with both hands, the severity of his hitting was astounding, and he was undoubtedly one of the best wrestlers ever seen in the Prize Ring. Add to this his admirable generalship, indomitable pluck, and excellent temper, and you have the portrait of a consummate master of the art of boxing, whose superior the world has never seen and perhaps never will see.

As a Boniface, Owen was scarcely less

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famous than as a pugilist. For five-and-twenty years he kept the Horse Shoe in Tichborne Street, the most popular sporting hostelry in London, and in the days before betting-clubs were known, the great West End rendezvous of backers and book-makers.

The Horse Shoe on the night before the Derby was a sight never to be forgotten. The place was crammed; you found yourself rubbing shoulders with earls, viscounts, baronets, country squires, Members of Parliament—all the celebrities, in fact, of the sporting world, and the champagne was flowing like water. Whilst on the eve of a big fight the scene was equally exciting, and many thousands of pounds on such occasions would be wagered at Owen's bar. Many people thought that the gallant little light-weight had made his fortune in Tichborne Street, for he seemed to be always doing a roaring trade. But Owen, like Dick Curtis, was an inveterate gambler, and his takings at the Horse Shoe were regularly swept away by the croupiers at the hells.

and night-houses of Leicester Square and Coventry Street.

Now and then the "Little Wonder" gave proof that his right hand had not forgotten its cunning, and that he could still hold his own with his fists. As for example, when on the way back from Goodwood, he got down from the Marquis of Waterford's drag, and served out a saucy fellow who offered to thrash *any six* of the lot; or again, when coming back from the Derby, he gave an awful licking to a notorious bully from Hampstead, a big rough nearly 6ft. high; or again, when he and Dick Curtis and Sambo Sutton leathered eight hulking navvies who had been insulting a woman; or yet again, when he punched the head of that big Irish ruffian, Jem Bailey, who had in the most cowardly manner assaulted poor Jem Burn, when the latter was helpless from gout; Bailey was a 12 stoner, and an old hand at the game too, but Owen smothered him in blood, and soon made him cry "Peccavi!"

In course of time, however, rheumatic gout

and other ailments crippled the once active and athletic little boxer, and when I last saw and shook hands with him, a few months before his death, as he was getting out of an omnibus in Holborn, he was the most lamentable wreck of a man I ever set eyes upon.

But long before this he had come utterly to grief. The sudden death of his wife happened before he left the Horse Shoe, and was a terrible blow to him. After that he went downhill fast, and soon had to leave the old shop; but tried his hand as a publican once more at the Black Horse, in Oxenden Street, Haymarket, only to collapse again. Then the once popular, prosperous, petted favourite of the sporting world degenerated into a mere social waif and stray, a hanger-on and loafer at the skirts of society. The last time, I fancy, that he was seen in public was when some good Samaritans got up a benefit for him at the Cambridge Hall, Newman Street, Oxford Street. It was announced that Owen would wind up with Jemmy Welsh, the

game opponent of Massey, and long the popular landlord of the Griffin, Church Street, Borough; but both of them were so bad with rheumatic gout that they could not possibly put on the gloves. So the eloquent Dr Perfitt, well-known afterwards as the high priest of a new religious sect, made a speech instead, and alluded so pathetically to Owen's brilliant career in the past that the tears were streaming down the little man's face as he listened to the recital of his own glorious exploits and contrasted his bygone with his present self. Soon afterwards some of his old friends and patrons took compassion on him, and procured him a nomination to the Licensed Victuallers' Asylum in the Old Kent Road, where Jem Ward too found a comfortable refuge for his old age; and there Owen peacefully ended his days. He died on the 9th of June 1879, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.

VIII

JEM BURN

"CANNY Newcassel, bonny Newcassel!" You know a good old North Country song, I daresay, of which that forms the chorus. Perhaps you know the big town upon the Tyne as well, and, unless you are a Northumbrian bred and born, possibly, whilst admitting that it is "canny," you may feel disposed to deny that it is "bonny." That, however, is a matter of taste; but one thing, at anyrate, is undeniable, and that is that the "Geordies" are as keen and good sportsmen as there are in all broad England. In that metropolis of the North there was born on the 15th of March 1804 a youngster who was destined to become one of the most

popular and celebrated characters that the Prize Ring has ever produced. His name was James Burn, and I should like to know what man was better known or more highly respected among London sportsmen of all classes for more than thirty years, till the day of his lamented death in 1862, than "Jolly Jem Burn."

Jem's parents were Durham folk from Darlington, who had migrated to Newcastle, and the nipper was apprenticed to his father's trade, that of a skin-dresser or "skiver," as they call it up there. He grew up to be a fine, strapping lad, close upon 6ft. and a trifle over 12st. "Young Skiver," as he was nicknamed, soon showed that he could dress human skins as well as those of other animals. For he tanned the hides of some big "Geordies" to a pretty tune. The local champion, Jobson, the hero of twenty battles, went down before "Young Skiver's" conquering arm, after a desperate battle of an hour and twenty minutes. Jackson, of Jesmond, another unbeaten fighter renowned in the

district, was thrashed by Jem, after a terrific two hours' mill. Then Brown, of Sunderland, a mighty 13st. wrestler, challenged the Young Un, but was ignominiously licked in twenty-five minutes. Then Jem Burn began to think that he was cut out for a fighter, and that as there was no one among the "Geordies" worth contending with, he had better take the road to London, that Tom Tiddler's Ground of the aspiring pugilist. Besides, there was another attraction in the "great metrolopus," There were two uncles of Jem's there, both well-known fighting men—Ben and Bob Burn. Bob was a whopper who fought at 16st., but found both Tom Spring and Tom Shelton too good for him. "Uncle Ben," whom I remember well, was for many years a notable sporting publican, and believed himself to be the best man of his weight in England, though he won only three of the eight battles he fought, and was thrashed by Dan Dogherty, Silverthorne, Palmer Jones, Tom Spring and Tom Oliver; the last

named he did not fight till both of them were old stagers well on in their fifties. But Uncle Ben could always explain away his defeats most ingeniously, and prove entirely to his own satisfaction that he had never been fairly beaten, and that if he had only had reasonable luck and fair play he would have been Champion of England. At the time when Jem started for London, Uncle Ben was landlord of the Rising Sun, in Air Street; and being a man of quaint humour, and a good sort to boot, his public was popular both with the patrician and plebeian patrons of the Fancy.

When "Young Skiver" turned up in due course at the Rising Sun (of which in after days he was himself the landlord, in succession to poor Johnny Broome), and introduced himself to his Uncle Ben, the latter took careful stock of his nephew, and liking the look of him, gave him first a hearty welcome and a good meal, and then, when the lad was rested and refreshed, tried him in private with the gloves. The "nevvv"

proved even better than his looks promised, and the uncle lost no time introducing him to some of the tip-top Corinthians who visited his show. "Gentlemen," said Ben, "this young nevvv o' mine is a real good 'un, you take my word for it, and he'll be Champion of England soom day afore long." This was rather a large order; but then Ben was given to bragging, so the swells only laughed at him, and told him to trot the youngster out. Jem was duly trotted out, a good man was sent for, and the amateurs critically watched his performance with the gloves. The young man from the country acquitted himself so well that the toffs, while hesitating to say that he was up to championship form, or even gave promise of being so, agreed that he had the makings of a good fighter in him, and ought to have a fair trial. As for Uncle Ben, as the days went on he grew more and more proud of "My Nevvy," as he always called Jem; pointed to his stature, his long reach, his strong back and loins, and always wound up by saying, "Theer! look

at 'un. Ain't he the picture of a fighter? I tell 'ee, he's born to be champion, and he will be, for I'll take good care he has fairer play than his poor uncle ever had."

But though Ben bragged and blustered a lot about this wonderful nephew of his, he was far too shrewd and canny to go and match the lad against any well-known pugilist to begin with. No; Ben wanted to get a soft thing on if possible for Jem's start, to give the youngster confidence. And yet, when he *did* fix upon a trial horse for the "nevvv," most people thought it was the very reverse of a soft thing, for the man he pitched upon was a herculean Irishman, 6ft. 2in. in height, and weighing 14st., who went by the name of Big O'Neil, but must not be confounded with Ned Neale, of Streatham, whom Jem Burn afterwards fought, who was no more an Irishman than I am, though Pierce Egan, as usual, tried to prove him a Paddy in *Boxiana*, and clapped an "O" before his name.

Jack Langan's two great fights with Tom

Spring for the Championship (the hardest and most desperate Tom ever fought) had raised him to celebrity in England, whilst by his fellow-countrymen in Ireland he was simply idolised. Every aspiring sprig of shamrock who thought he could fight came over to England and introduced himself to Langan, who, being the most generous soul breathing, at once took the newcomer under his wing and gave him a fair chance of showing what he could do in the ring.

O'Neil was one of this sort. He had been hanging about for some time, living at Langan's expense; but his great size and strength and reputed prowess kept the lesser lights among the heavy-weights from taking him on, and, of course, he couldn't yet rise to the terms of the first-raters. It was therefore a godsend to the big Irishman when Ben Burn offered to match his nephew against him for £50 a-side. Here at last was the chance O'Neil had been waiting for. He felt that his fortune was made, for he would give this slip of an Englishman such a hiding that backers would no

longer be wanting to match him (O'Neil) against the best man in England for the Champion's Belt, which he had made up his mind to carry back to "Ould Oireland" in triumph. Jack Langan promptly found the money for his big fellow-countryman, and the pair were matched to fight for £50 a-side on the 26th of July 1824. Considering that both men were unknown to the London ring, the stakes were phenomenally large, for a pony a-side was usually deemed a very substantial prize for two untried men to contend for. Uncle Ben would have been content with £25, but his swell patrons offered to make it £50; and General Barton, a wealthy and eccentric Irish sportsman who lived at Slough, and believed that O'Neil was the coming man, was quite ready to put down £100 for his favourite if necessary.

So to Chertsey, on a broiling midsummer day, the cream of the sportsmen of London drove to see how Ben Burn's much-belauded nephew would shape against this huge Irishman, in whose prowess General Barton

and Jack Langan expressed such profound belief.

When the two combatants stood up stripped in the ring, everyone present exclaimed that it was a horse to a hen, and that it was a shame to put up a stripling like Burn to fight such a colossus as O'Neil.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Ben. What d'ye mean by it?" asked one well-known aristocratic sportsman. Uncle Ben scratched his head and said drily, "Well, I've an idea the young 'un can foight a bit, and he'll soon tell us all about it." Young Jem was a bit nervous; but he smiled as his uncle nodded to him, and put up his hands to the giant before him. O'Neil looked far bigger stripped than he had ever done in his clothes, which is what a good athlete should do, and very few of those present realised what a Hercules he was till they saw him facing young Jem, who, though close upon 6ft. and 12st. in weight, looked a mere slip of a lad by contrast with the big, brawny, muscular

Paddy. And, remember, those were days when strength and weight were believed in far more than they were after Tom Sayers and Jem Mace had taught the world that there is nothing in human shape that a clever and scientific 11st. man need be afraid to face.

The big Irishman stretched his arms, showed his ponderous muscle, and then proceeded to smash up his opponent. But he didn't find the task quite so simple and easy as he had expected. For Jem did not stand still to be slogged, but stepped back and fought on the retreat. O'Neil followed him, but found that Burn was quick on his pins, and kept just out of distance in a most exasperating manner. At last the Irishman let fly; the blow fell short, he overreached himself, and Jem nailed him sharply in the face with right and left before he could recover his balance. The Irishman shook his head, came on again, and was just about to hit, when Jem cleverly forestalled him and gave him a clinking smash from the left on the right

eye. O'Neil gave a kind of roar like the bellow of a wounded bull, rushed at Burn, by sheer weight bored him to the ropes, and sent him through them with a punch in the ribs; but Jem had tapped his foe smartly in the *mêlée*, and as O'Neil walked to his corner, he put his hand to his damaged eye and looked thoughtful.

Jem played the same game successfully in the next two rounds, and was so pleased with himself, that in the fourth round he went in to win, but in his hurry missed his aim, and caught a smash on the ear from O'Neil's huge fist, which knocked him clean off his feet.

Uncle Ben warned his "nevvv" not to do such a stupid trick again, and the young 'un heeded the warning. From that moment he fought with admirable coolness, steadiness and judgment, keeping away and jobbing O'Neil with awful severity in the face as he came in. The big Irishman soon looked a hideous object. There was a gash over his left temple, from which the blood never ceased to flow, and another one

under his right eye, which had been just closed before the cut. So rapid were Jem's deliveries, that O'Neil was fairly bothered, and more than once put his hand up to his face and looked round with a bewildered air as though he were saying to himself, "Where the devil did that pelt come from?" But bleeding and half blind though he was, the thought of defeat did not yet cross his mind. He came up promptly at the call of "Time," and was across the scratch before his adversary reached it. In the tenth round, as Jem was retreating, he caught his foot in a tuft of grass, and before he could recover himself, O'Neil, with a terrific swipe on the neck knocked him down as clean as a whistle. "Ould Oireland for ever," shouted Jack Langan. "The shamrock will win this day." But when Sir Bellingham Graham offered to lay him £20 to £5 that the shamrock *didn't* win, Jack was discreetly silent. Still, although Jem appeared to have the fight safe, there was always a dangerous hit left in O'Neil,

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which might at any moment turn the scale. And, indeed, he very nearly did the trick in the twenty-fifth round. Dizzy, weak, wounded, blinded though he was, he once more hit Burn off his feet with a blow which, if it had landed on the point of the jaw, instead of just below it, would probably have knocked Jem out of time. As it was, Jem was so weak after it that it seemed to be anybody's battle. But the fearful pasting he had had about the head and face had half stupefied O'Neil, and he was unable to take advantage of the opening offered him. He missed every time he struck out. Jem pulled himself together, walked straight up to his man and hit him just as he pleased, till at last O'Neil, bleeding and frightfully bruised, with both eyes closed, stumbled and fell senseless. The fight lasted just fifty minutes, and as soon as it was over, Sir Bellingham Graham, one of the finest sportsmen in England, came up to Jem and gave him a £10 note, saying, "Well done, my lad, you've fought admirably."

But Jem Burn did not fulfil the promise of his first fight. Ned Neale, the "Streatham Youth," beat him twice, and Jem met with defeat at the hands of Phil Sampson, the "Birmingham Youth." But he thrashed Pat Magee, and in his first battle with Ned Baldwin, the famous "White-headed Bob," Jem was also victorious. But "White-headed Bob" was not satisfied with his defeat, and the two met a second time in the ring. The story of that second fight. I shall let an eye-witness narrate.

A few years ago I met an old gentleman at Reading, whose recollections of the town and district went back to the first quarter of the present century. Amongst other most interesting reminiscences, he gave me the following, which I reproduce in his own words from notes made at the time:—"It is nearly sixty years since that I, with a friend, was driving through Twyford on our way to keep an appointment at Knowle Hill; but seeing several carriages and many persons on foot going towards Ruscombe Lake, which is near Twyford, we found on

inquiry that they were on their way to see a prize fight between two celebrated boxers. Up to that moment neither of us had any idea that a contest of this kind was about to occur. The place chosen was near Ruscombe Church, and not a mile, I should think, from Twyford. As we were leaving the latter place, a gentlemanly-looking person asked us if we would kindly allow his friend (who was a professional man) to ride with us, and as his friend looked as he was described, we did not hesitate to oblige him. When we arrived at a meadow, we saw that a roped ring had been formed. Here we were stopped at the gate, and obliged to pay a shilling for admission. The 'professional gentleman' here alighted, and thanked us for giving him a lift. In wishing us good morning, he said, 'I am going to fight Josh Hudson's Black.'

"When we arrived at the ring we found it surrounded with four-horse brakes and vehicles of all sorts, besides a great number of people. Before the fight began I saw a

few of the aristocracy inside the ring, talking to the friends of the combatants, one of them a neighbouring baronet, with whose name we are not unfamiliar even now, and there were also many others of similar social position. Inside the ropes were the bottle-holders and seconds, also many celebrated pugilists. Peter Crawley and the celebrated light-weight, Dick Curtis, seconded one of the name of "White-headed Bob," who, when he entered the ring, was a perfect picture of a man. He was dressed in white flannel, had white curly hair, and when he stripped down to the waist he appeared as fair in complexion as any man I ever saw, and there did not seem to be a blemish about him. Then came Jem Burn, a taller man, but not so well built as his opponent. As soon as he was stripped the men were placed in the position assigned them, but I do not remember which of them 'won the toss.' They then shook hands and began sparring, but some time elapsed before a blow was struck. At last Burn hit his man straight in the face, which knocked him

against the ropes, and he fell before Burn could inflict another blow. Several rounds followed of a similar character, and it seemed that Burn must win on account of his being longer in the reach. If I mistake not, the latter, by hitting Bob on the head, injured his hand, as his seconds poured water upon it and threw water in his face. The next round Bob, after receiving two or three severe hits, by indomitable pluck got into close quarters, and then ensued a most fearful struggle. Bob's head was in chancery, but he pommelled away at Burn's ribs with his right hand whilst Burn's punished Bob's face. So they held together, Bob having his left arm round Burn's waist, and in this way fell against the ropes, both dreadfully punished by their backs being so badly cut. When again they were placed on their seconds' knees they required much attention, for both were nearly exhausted, and Bob's face much disfigured.

"By this time they had fought fully an hour. A few more rounds occurred, both men falling, the under one putting up his

knees for protection and the other falling so that he might injure his opponent. The next round was severely contested for men so weakened. Burn knocked Bob off his legs, and some thought the battle over. At this moment an uncle of Burn's pulled down the colours and claimed the win for his nephew, saying, 'You will be tried for manslaughter if you go on.' The seconds, however, raised their men, who stood like dummies for a moment, not having power to raise their arms. Dick Curtis at this juncture called out loudly in his man's ear, 'Bob! Bob! Wake up!' The poor fellow looked up as if in a dream, and then bored his head against Burn; both fell at the ropes unable to move. They were instantly raised and restoratives given, but Burn made no response. When 'Time!' was called Curtis and Crawley stuck up their man, but Burn was carried off the ground, and 'White-headed Bob' was proclaimed victor.

"I never, before or since," continued my venerable friend, "witnessed such wonderful

courage as these men displayed, for, independent of the severe punishment they inflicted on one another, they were very much injured when coming in contact with the ropes. Several times during the fight Bob, when driven near them, would run back, and this gave him, by the spring of the rope, a quick forward movement, or he would have been sadly punished. When he was taken away his face and head presented a fearful spectacle, every feature was literally knocked out of him, and the wonder to my mind was how he, after such a fearful loss of blood, was able to sustain this protracted fight, for I think it continued more than an hour and a half. I was informed that the winner obtained a purse of 200 guineas, also that this sum was raised by subscription amongst the aristocracy, some of whom posted down from London to see it.

"A Mr Basing, from Reading, had his watch stolen during the contest, and as he was mentioning the matter to me a well-dressed man came up and said, 'Have you

lost anything, sir?' 'Yes,' he replied; 'my watch.' 'Would you like to have it again?' said the man. 'If so, what will you give, and I will see if I can get it for you.' 'Five pounds,' grumbled out the old gentleman. The man left us for a few minutes, and then returned with the watch, but I could see that if any attempt had been made to seize it there were confederates near who would have attacked us."

Now, there you have a description of a fight from one who was no ring-goer, and who, in fact, denounced the affair as "a most demoralising and shocking sight." Yet I think you will allow that the details are graphic and interesting enough to justify me in quoting them. One other anecdote my venerable friend related in connection with this battle which I must not omit.

"More than thirty years after this contest," he said, "I was on my way to London accompanied by a friend to whom I related some of the incidents connected with this affair, and he said, 'Burn is still living,

and if you will go with me I will show you the man.' We accordingly went from Regent Street to an inn in Air Street, kept then by a niece of Burn's. Burn himself had retired, I believe, and lived out of London, but usually came to town in the morning. My friend said to him, 'Mr Burn, I have brought a neighbour of mine to see you who witnessed your fight with "White-headed Bob" at Ruscombe Lake.' 'I am glad to see you, sir,' replied Burn, and in the course of conversation he said, 'That reminds me that, some time after the event to which you have alluded, I was sitting in this chair, with my arm in a sling, suffering from a severe attack of gout, when a gentleman came in and said, "Mr Burn, I believe?" "My name is Burn," said I, when in a moment he gave me an open-handed smack on my face which nearly knocked me out of my seat, and then bolted like a shot. I suppose that he had made a bet that he would do this, and knew that I could not follow him.'"

That second fight with "White-headed

Bob" was Jem Burn's last appearance as a principal in the Prize Ring. But for five-and-thirty years afterwards he was the life and soul of the London Fancy, and his "Gentlemen's Sparring Club" was the most select and exclusive in the kingdom.

With the exception of Tom Spring's parlour in Holborn, there was no more favourite haunt of sportsmen in my hot youth than the sanctum of Jolly Jem Burn, at the Queen's Head in Windmill Court, Haymarket. In no hostelry in London were there to be seen so many sporting "toffs" of the first water as at Jem's; yet the burly host himself was no toady or tuft-hunter. He had a civil word for every decent man who called at his house, were it only for a humble glass of ale. In this respect he was a contrast to Owen Swift, who gave himself absurd airs. I remember once hearing the latter say to a couple of respectable working men who came in for a pot of beer, "Here, you can mizzle—we don't want none of Jem Burn's twopenny customers here." Yet for every

one aristocratic patron that Swift could claim, Jolly Jem could have shown half a dozen. Indeed, I may safely say that with the exception of "Gentleman" Jackson, Jolly Jem was on familiar and intimate terms with more noblemen and gentlemen than any other pugilist that ever lived. Lord Caledon, when he was married to the beautiful Miss Musgrave, invited Jem to the wedding breakfast, and I have even heard it said that mine host of the Queen's Head officiated as best man at the ceremony in St George's, Hanover Square; but this is a statement open to question.

I have heard Jem, however, say with a sigh that his acquaintance with the aristocracy was not always profitable to him, for when a swell who had spent £3 or £4 in his house wanted a sovereign or half a sovereign to go home with, Jem couldn't very well refuse, and he used to say that, if all those little loans were repaid, he would be a richer man by a thousand or two than he was. But with champagne at 15s. a bottle, and port and

sherry from 7s. to half a guinea, the noble sportsmen who drank so freely in Jem's parlour must have been very paying customers.

It was in that parlour, by the way, that a sensational encounter once took place between two famous pugilists. Lords Longford and Caledon, and half a dozen officers of the Household Cavalry were there, and, sitting in his favourite place by the fireplace, was the Bold Bendigo, who was a great pal of Jem's. Ben Caunt, who was then Champion of England (it was before his last fight with Bendigo), walked in, and Jem, who was always anxious to be civil and courteous to his guests, said, "Here is the champion, gentleman." Up started Bendy, who had been imbibing freely, and to the amazement of everybody cried out, "*Him* champion! I'll let you see who's the champion; I'll fight him now, or anyone else!" And suiting the action to the words, he advanced menacingly towards Caunt, who at once let drive a vicious blow with his left. But Bendy

ducked aside, and Ben's huge fist smashed in a piece of panelling. The Bold One promptly shot his left in under the ear, and sent Ben staggering against the wall. Lord Longford, however, quickly interposed, and said in a decisive tone, "Come, come, this won't do here, you know; drop it at once;" and as several other swells added their protest, the two rivals sulkily put their hands down and separated.

One of the attractions of the Queen's Head was a pretty, rosy-faced girl, in cherry-coloured ribbons, who used to preside behind the bar. She was, I believe, Jem's niece, and at that time he was either a widower, or separated from his wife, I forget which. At anyrate there was no older woman there to look after this girl of eighteen, and Bendigo constantly took Jem to task on this point, for the jolly Boniface was often out, and left her for hours alone, subjected to endless temptations. More than once Bendy, whose instincts were manly and honourable, told Jem that if he didn't look after the girl better, he (Bendy)

would give him a good hiding, and on one occasion they had such a warm altercation on the subject that they would certainly have come to blows in the parlour had not the young lady herself, *causa teterrima belli*, rushed in, and poured oil upon the troubled waters.

During his later years Jolly Jem found a terrible enemy in the gout, which at last attacked him in the stomach, and that assault proved fatal. On the morning of the 29th of May 1862, Jem Burn went over to the majority before he had reached his sixtieth year.

IX

BENDIGO AND BEN CAUNT

To have given his name to a colonial settlement, a popular liqueur, a famous race-horse and a new bishopric is surely as remarkable a proof of celebrity as any man in these modern days can boast. But what is still more remarkable is that the man whose fame has been so extensively and so variously commemorated was one of "the people opprobriously called prize-fighters." Probably the recently-consecrated Bishop of Bendigo is unaware that he takes the title of his see from the nickname of a noted pugilist. Nevertheless such is the fact.

William Thompson, of Nottingham, best known to fame as Bendigo, was certainly one of the most remarkable men that the Prize



BENDIGO.

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Ring has produced. He owed his *sobriquet* to a curious circumstance. He was one of a triplet of sons whom some waggish acquaintance of the Thompsons dubbed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The last named was the famous bruiser. At first he was known as "Abednego," and was so styled in a paragraph advertisement in *Bell's Life* which appeared in 1835. The name was subsequently shortened to "Bednego," and finally corrupted into "Bendigo."

William Thompson was born in Nottingham on the 11th of October 1811, and came of respectable stock, one of his uncles, I have heard, was a dissenting minister of considerable repute. His eldest brother John became a well-to-do manufacturer, and Bendy's pugilistic exploits were a sore trial to him, indeed the "douce mon" on more than one occasion had his "disreputable brother" arrested with a view to prevent his fighting. But the irrepressible Bendy was not by these means to be forced into the groove of respectability. He

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struck out a line for himself and he stuck to it.

His fighting instincts he undoubtedly derived from his mother, to whom he was passionately attached. His devotion to her, indeed, was such as sons rarely display among our undemonstrative race, and was more like the sentiment which is so strong among Frenchmen. And yet Mrs Thompson was hardly the sort of woman to inspire affection. The rest of her family regarded her with horror and dread, for she was a coarse and violent virago—the terror of her husband and her neighbours. But in her own savage way she loved her fighting son and he loved her. I have heard Bendigo say that on days when he was fighting far away she would sit and watch the clock which kept ticking to her ears “Ben-dy—Ben-dy,” and she felt satisfied that her son was winning. “By God!” she used to add, “if it had ticked Ben Caunt I’d have up and smashed its blasted face.” A terrible woman! but the only woman that Bendigo ever in his life loved.

Gifted with exceptional strength and activity, Bendigo was from his boyhood an expert at most manly games. He was a fair cricketer, and was once matched against the famous George Parr for £50, in the days when single cricket matches were popular. But Bendigo turned up on the ground with a lame leg, and Parr's backers, scorning to take advantage of their opponent's misfortune, declared the match off—which was a good thing for Bendy, who would have stood no chance against such a master of the game as George Parr. Bendy has himself told me that he could “lob,” to use his own word, a cricket ball upwards of 100 yards, by which I suppose he meant jerking. As an acrobat he was very clever, and, in fact, he had few superiors as an all-round athlete among his contemporaries.

It is as the great rival of Ben Caunt that Bendigo is best known to fistic fame. Even to this day you will find Nottingham sportsmen who will argue hotly over the merits of the two men, both natives of the same shire, and I can remember the time when such

arguments were so fiercely debated that they often led to blows. You may gather then how bitter and intense was the spirit of partisanship when the two men were actually belligerents.

Bendigo's first recorded battle was against Caunt on the 21st of July 1835. Both were then unknown to fame, and the reports of the fight are very meagre. "Throughout twenty-two rounds," says the reporter of *Bell's Life*, "Caunt stood up with indomitable pluck and perseverance to receive a long way the lion's share of the punishment while his shifty opponent always avoided the return by getting down. Caunt, at last, in a rage at these tactics, which he could not counteract or endure, rushed across the ring, called on him to stand up before the call of 'Time' by the umpires, and then struck Bendigo before he rose from his second's knee. The referee and umpires having decided that this blow was foul, the stakes, £25 a-side, were awarded to Bendigo. It was the expressed opinion of the spectators that had Caunt kept his

temper and husbanded his strength, the issue would have gone the other way, as he proved himself game to the backbone, while his opponent was made up of dodges from heel to headpiece."

Three years elapsed before they met again in the ring. During the interval Bendigo had added greatly to his fame by defeating Brassey, of Bradford, a grim and formidable fighter, Young Langan, of Liverpool, and Bill Looney, also of that city — the last-named a really first-class heavy-weight. Caunt, meanwhile, had only fought a couple of unknown men, whose defeat added but little to the victor's reputation. The second battle between Caunt and Bendigo took place on the 3rd of April 1838, and the victory was awarded to Caunt on an appeal of foul. Each had scored a win, but neither was satisfied.

Ben never would admit that Bendigo fought him fairly, and declared that he was done out of the first fight by Bendigo's dropping tactics; on the other hand Bendigo maintained that the verdict was most unfairly

given against him in the second engagement. The fact is that there was such a disparity in size between the two men that it was impossible to expect a real, fair stand-up fight between them. Caunt stood 6ft. 2½in., scaled 15st. 7lb., and was probably the most powerful man ever seen in the Prize Ring. Bendigo's weight was but 11st. 10lb., and his height 5ft. 9½in. How could you expect the smaller man to stand up and let the big one have a fair slog at him that would have knocked the senses out of him? So Bendy ducked and dropped, and did all he knew to escape the onslaught of Ben's ponderous fists. In the second battle Caunt played what he considered a clever counter game. Being too clumsy and unskilful to hit the dodgy Bendigo with his fists, Ben rushed at him, caught him in his arms, and tried to hug the breath out of him or crush him senseless against the ropes. The consequence was that Bendy was nearly strangled. Moreover, the latter laboured under the disadvantage of being without his proper fighting shoes, and, having no spikes, was

unable to get a fair grip of the moist and slippery turf. Nevertheless, he punished Caunt fearfully, and was undoubtedly winning, the odds were 3 to 1 on him, when he slipped and fell *accidentally*, and the referee awarded the fight to Caunt, on the ground that Bendy had deliberately dropped to avoid being hit. There was a fearful uproar when this decision was known. Bendigo and his friends were furious, and Caunt narrowly escaped being lynched—he had to gallop for his life on a horse from the field of battle.

Of course Bendigo was mad to have another shy at Caunt, and a fierce paper war ensued between them. Ben, however, did not seem at all anxious to take his rival on again, so Bendy had a go at Deaf Burke, who had just returned, flushed with victory, from the United States. The Deaf Un was so confident of winning that he neglected his training. Moreover, his constitution had been impaired by the dissipation into which his fast aristocratic patrons, the Marquis of Waterford and that set, had

led him. Consequently Bendigo had little difficulty in thrashing him, and after his victory, Jem Ward, who still called himself Champion, resigned that title and presented the Nottingham hero with the Belt. This was too much for Caunt, and he promptly challenged his old opponent to fight out the rubber.

Just as they had come to terms Bendigo had a serious accident, which undoubtedly crippled him for life, and at the time was thought to have ended all his prospects in the Prize Ring. Mr William Thompson, *alias* Bendigo, was incorrigibly fond of larking. At the Military Steeplechases near Nottingham, his native place, in March 1840, he was fooling as usual, and in attempting a new kind of somersault (he was a very clever acrobat) the Bold One injured his knee-cap so seriously that the surgeons told him he would never be able to run or jump or fight again. For more than two years Bendy was laid on the shelf, and was reckoned as being quite out of the hunt. But the spirit of the man was unconquerable, and to the surprise

of everyone he came up to London, showed that he could still box by a clever set-to with ponderous Peter Crawley at Jem Burn's, and then challenged Tass Parker to fight for £200 a-side. Tass, who was up in the stirrups just then, having recently beaten the game Tom Britton, of Liverpool, and the formidable Brassey, of Bradford, accepted the challenge, and the men were matched. But Bendy's eldest brother, John Thompson, a well-to-do manufacturer in Nottingham, who, as I have said, objected to William's pugilistic vagaries, had the latter arrested on the eve of the fight, and the stakes were forfeited to Parker.

Meanwhile Ben Caunt, having beaten Brassey and Nick Ward, after losing one fight to the latter on an appeal of foul, had set out for America, whence he returned in company with Charley Freeman, the American Giant, in March 1842. It was not, however, till the close of 1843 that Bendigo's injured knee was sufficiently strong to warrant him in once more challenging his old rival for the championship. But he

failed to bring Caunt to book till 1845. For Ben had taken the Coach and Horses in St Martin's Lane, and was doing so well that he did not care much about fighting. At last, however, Bendigo's taunts stung the big man into action, and a match was made between them to fight on the 9th of September 1845, for £200 a-side and the belt.

At the final deposit on August 26, at Tom Spring's, The Castle Tavern, Holborn, it was officially announced that both men were in splendid condition. Bendigo had trained at Crosby, near Liverpool, under the care of Jem Ward, his old friend and backer, and Caunt at Hatfield, the Marquis of Salisbury's place, in Hertfordshire, where he was looked after by his uncle, Ben Butler, and by Jem Turner (the D'Orsay of the Ring), besides being constantly visited by *his* great friend and patron, Tom Spring. Caunt, who was now thirty-three years of age, had scaled 18st. when he went into training; but on the day of the fight was reduced to 13st. 13lbs., the lightest weight at which he ever

fought. Bendigo, who was three years older, weighed 12st. 1lb. and was also in the pink of condition.

Newport Pagnell, in Bucks, was the rendezvous, and every inn there and at Stoney Stratford and the intermediate villages was crammed with sportsmen from London, Nottingham, and a score of other towns, on the eve of the great battle.

The police somewhat spoiled the arrangements of the eventful day, September 9th, 1845, and it was not until a third ring was pitched at Sutfield Green, in Oxfordshire, that the belligerents were allowed to strip in peace. There must have been at least 10,000 spectators on the ground, a large proportion of them roughs from Nottingham, who made themselves exceedingly disagreeable to all the respectable sportsmen present.

It was not until twenty minutes past three that the men entered the ring—Caunt first, attended by Young Molineaux, the Black, and D'Orsay Turner as seconds, old Ben Butler having charge of the

bottles. Bendigo was attended by Johnny Hannan, Jem Ward and Jem Burn. They shook hands, and tossed for choice of corners. Caunt won, and took the higher ground, with his back to the sun. Spring, in compliance with the articles, produced Caunt's belt and handed it to Bendigo, to show it was the genuine article. Bendy, full of larks as in the old days before his accident, buckled the belt on in bravado and laughingly offered to bet Caunt £50 that he (Ben) never wore the trophy again. But Big Ben was in no humour for joking and declined the wager. The belt was then handed to Jem Ward to await the result. Next followed the usual long dispute about the election of a referee, but at last both sides agreed to Mr George Osbaldeston, the famous "Old Squire," and one of the greatest all-round sportsmen the world has ever seen. It was not, however, without considerable reluctance that the Squire consented to act in the face of that ugly contingent of Nottingham "Lambs," and it was only when it was strongly

put to him that unless he accepted the office there would be no fight that he undertook the thankless duty. Bendigo's colours were blue, with white spots; Caunt's bright orange, with blue border, having the following inscription on a garter in the centre:—"Caunt v. Bendigo for £400 and the Championship of England, 9th September 1845. May the best man win."

When Caunt stood up stripped to fight few persons there were prepared for the extraordinary change in his appearance. He had got rid of every ounce of superfluous flesh, and was nothing but bone, sinew and muscle—as gaunt and lean as a greyhound. But what a frame it was! What huge bones! What mighty thews! What a colossal mass of sheer strength! Close-cropped, with his immense ears sticking out like sails, Ben Caunt looked in every sense of the phrase an ugly customer. Bendy seemed a mere chicken by the side of him. Yet you had only to scan closely that wiry, powerful frame to see that there was tremendous hitting

power in the smaller man, and though his lameness was apparent, he managed nevertheless to get about with wonderful activity. Bendigo, as I have before said, always fought right foot foremost, like Ned Turner, Jem Edwards, of Cheltenham, and the famous Bishop Sharpe. He had a curious way of crouching, too, with his left shoulder much higher than his right, which made him look considerably shorter than he was. Caunt, on the other hand, stood straight and square, with both arms somewhat extended, making the most of his great height, 6ft. 2½in.—5in. more than his opponent. Bendy at once began to play round his man in his old style, dodging and shifting his ground in the hope of tempting Big Ben to let out. But Ben kept fronting him, ready to meet any rush. When, however, the rush came it took Caunt unawares. Bendy, creeping closer and closer, feinted, drew Ben's blow, ducked in under his guard and landed a sounding smack on the right eye. Caunt for a second looked savage, then grinned in his

usual good-natured way, and shook his head as much as to say, "You don't catch me napping again, my lad." But a minute later Bendy cleverly repeated the dose, and, with a slashing left-hander on the right cheek, opened the old scar left by Brassey after that awful blow with which he felled Caunt in their great fight. The blood ran in streams down Big Ben's face, and the air rang with triumphant shouts from the bold Bendy's pals.

Caunt, finding that he couldn't plant a single blow on his slippery foe, tried to close and grip him. But Bendigo was not easy to get hold of. In the third round, however, Caunt got him in his powerful grasp, and flung him across the ropes, but Bendy came up smiling, and seemed little the worse for it. Before long it became apparent that Caunt was over-trained; in his anxiety to get rid of all superfluous beef, he had overdone the thing and weakened his constitution. He soon began to blow and pant, and Bendigo, seeing this, took heart of grace and dashed in, cutting

and bruising Caunt's face fearfully, and escaping himself without a mark. In the eighth round, however, Ben got a fair hold of his man and flung him across the ropes, then leaned heavily on him, and would doubtless have done Bendy serious injury had he not overbalanced himself and fallen over on his head outside the ring, carrying Bendigo with him. The Nottingham "Lambs" yelled and hooted and swore at Ben for his cowardly conduct. But then, what else was Ben to do? The laws of the Ring allowed him to force his antagonist on the ropes and squeeze him there to his heart's content; and as he couldn't punish his wily foe in any other way, who can blame him for adopting the only course open to him?

Bendigo's hitting was terrific, and Caunt's face was a horrible sight. All his old wounds, and he had many, were re-opened, and the cuts and bruises on his visage had so altered it that it was difficult to believe that it was the headpiece of the same man who had entered the ring half an hour before. I

suppose that, with the exception, perhaps, of the fearful hit with which Brassey floored Ben, no one present that day had ever seen a more awful blow delivered than the left-hander which Bendigo got home in the thirteenth round of this fight. It caught Caunt on the wound already inflicted on his right cheek, and it struck him with such terrible force that he was knocked clean off his legs. Bendy himself actually rebounded against the ropes from the impact of that blow, and Ben lay on the ground, stiff and still, quite stunned. A little later Bendigo, with another frightful left - hander, split Caunt's upper lip in two. But Ben was a glutton for punishment, and though he had never in his life been so horribly mauled as he was by Bendy's bony fists that day, he never thought of giving in. Sooner or later he felt sure that he should get *one*, just *one* home that would stretch Master Bendigo out, or else get a fair grip of him, and give him such a fall as would dash the senses out of him. He never, however, quite succeeded in attaining these objects,

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though the fight lasted for upwards of two hours; but towards the close Caunt certainly was getting the best of it, despite all the wiliness of Bendigo, who dropped whenever he saw Ben coming too close to be pleasant.

The battle was frequently interrupted by free fights. For whenever Ben got Bendy against the cords and hugged him, the Nottingham "Lambs" made a rush to cut the ropes, and over and over again blows were aimed at Ben's head with bludgeons, which only missed him by a hair's breadth. The last three or four rounds were fought amid an awful uproar, and I don't think anyone there saw clearly what happened. The referee, however (Squire Osbaldeston), on being appealed to in the ninety-third round by Bendigo's seconds, declared that Caunt had deliberately gone down without a blow, and had consequently lost the fight. Here are his own words: "I saw every round distinctly and clearly, and when Caunt came up for the last round he had evidently not recovered from the ninety-second. After the men were in position, Bendigo very soon commenced

operations, and Caunt turned round directly and skulked away with his back to Bendigo and sat down on his nether end. He never knocked Bendigo down once in the fight, nor even got him against the ropes in the last round. In my opinion Caunt got away as soon as he could from Bendigo, fell without a blow to avoid being hit out of time, and fairly lost the fight." Such was the referee's version of the affair, and the opinion of the finest all-round sportsman in England should carry weight. Ben Caunt's version of what happened, however, threw a different complexion upon the incident.

Ben declared that the round was finished, or at anyrate he thought it was, and that he went down from a determination not to be taken by surprise or to renew the struggle till "time" was again called. That explanation seems to me, as the gentleman says in "The Liars," "too jolly thin." I have heard from sportsmen who were present various stories of the fight, but for the most part they agreed on this point, that Caunt never fought worse in his life, that his hitting was ludic-

rously wild and ineffective, and that he showed no judgment either in defence or attack. He gave himself away time after time to his clever and tricky opponent, who never let a chance slip, but planted his blows with stinging severity. That both men towards the close were guilty, whether intentionally or unintentionally no one could say for certain, of acts which were "foul" according to the laws of the Prize Ring, is indisputable. But if Bendigo hit Caunt below the belt, Caunt tried to disable Bendigo with his knee, so it was six of one and half a dozen of the other. The disgraceful and ruffianly conduct of the rough partisans of both men caused such a scene of uproar and confusion round the ring that either combatant might be excused for losing his head. No impartial spectator could say that it was a fair stand-up fight, or that it was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. But considering the disparity in size between the men, I do not see how the fight could well have been fought on other lines. Of course, Caunt was savage at being unfairly, as he main-

tained, done out of the stakes. He never would admit that he was defeated. For a long while there was the bitterest enmity between him and Bendigo. But at last they made up their differences, buried the hatchet, and became friends for the rest of their lives. They celebrated their reconciliation by a monster joint benefit at the National Baths, Westminster Road, on the 4th of February 1850, and it was on that occasion that, to the surprise of everyone, Tom Paddock came forward and challenged Bendigo. The latter reluctantly accepted the challenge, and old and stale though he was, contrived cleverly to beat the hot-tempered, impetuous Paddock.

This was Bendy's last battle; but for many years he was one of the characters of Nottingham, where endless stories of his eccentricities are still current. When sober there was not a pleasanter and more agreeable fellow than Bendigo. He was a born clown, and his acrobatic feats, even when an old man, were extraordinary. Moreover, he was a first-rate fisherman and an enthusiastic

gardener. But when he was drunk he was the terror of the place. Unfortunately it took very little liquor to make poor Bendy mad. His head was not strong, and the alcohol seemed to fly straight to his brain. In his cups he would hurl the first missile that came to hand at the head of anyone whom he thought to have offended him. I have heard of his stripping a butcher's shop on one such occasion, and flinging the joints one after another at the crowd who were jeering at him. There was a big policeman at Nottingham who bore the name of Caunt, and it was bad for that bobby when Bendigo came across him in his drunken moments, for he always associated the unfortunate constable with his namesake the mighty Ben, and went for him straight.

Time after time he was brought up before the magistrates and fined, and I remember how Bendy used to try and mollify one "beak," who, like himself, was a lover of horticulture, with the present of a beautiful bouquet of flowers when he was brought up on bail for one of his wild sprees. Sometimes when

no assault had been committed, and drunkenness was the only misdemeanour charged against him, this bribe was successful in softening the heart of the Rhadamanthus on the bench, who would dismiss Bendy with a trifling fine, and a friendly caution "not to do it again."

And yet, with all his violence and outbursts of ferocity, Bendigo had a good heart. His deep and sincere affection for his mother, terrible old Amazon as she was, I have already commented upon, and a not less noteworthy and pleasing trait in his character was his extraordinary gentleness to children. He had a little property of his own, besides the pound a week which his brother John bequeathed him, and so far as his means went was always ready to help a friend, or even a stranger, in distress. Three times he saved persons from drowning at the risk of his own life. On one occasion, when he was fishing, a young woman fell into the Trent, and would inevitably have been drowned had not Bendigo jumped in with his clothes on, swum to her assistance, and brought her

safe to shore. Then he calmly returned to his rod and line, drenched though he was, quietly resumed his fishing, and when it was proposed to reward him for his gallantry, he scornfully refused to take a farthing for saving a fellow-creature's life.

In 1870 the revivalists, with Richard Weaver at their head, got hold of Bendigo, and did their best to make a religious mountebank of him. He was hawked about the country as a converted character, and the announcement that he was to preach and pray drew thousands. I remember seeing him in London, got up in black coat and white tie, his hair, always straight and sleek, plastered down, and a general look of Stiggins about him when he came up to figure as one of the "stars" at a revival meeting. It was on this occasion that the late Lord Longford, of sporting renown, met him in Oxford Street, and stopping the ex-champion, looked in amazement at his get-up, and then exclaimed, "Hulloa, Bendy! What's your little game now?" "Truly, my lord," replied Bendigo, unctuously, "I am now fighting Satan, and

behold, Scripture says the victory shall be mine." "Hope so, Bendy," rejoined his lordship, drily, "but pray fight Beelzebub more fairly than you did Ben Caunt, or else I shall change sides, and all my sympathies will go with Old Nick." "My lord," answered Bendy, "you backed me against Ben Caunt, and I won you your money, so *you've* no cause to complain. I beat Caunt and I mean to beat the Devil, so you had better back me again." But his lordship shook his head, and went away laughing.

Now and then the new convert "fell away from grace." I will give one anecdote in illustration of Bendy's backsliding. He had joined the Good Templars, and for some time proved a great attraction at their meetings. On one occasion he was proceeding to a temperance gathering at Beeston, about three miles from Nottingham, accompanied by a leading member of the Order of Good Templars, when on the way Bendy unfortunately fell in with an old sporting pal, whom he had not seen for years. There

was a cordial greeting, and they began to talk of old times. The old pal suggested that it was dry work talking, and suggested a friendly glass at a neighbouring pub. Bendy replied that he couldn't do that as he was a pledged teetotaler. The other affected surprise, and said, "Come, come, one glass won't do you any harm." But Bendy stoutly resisted the temptation for some time. At last, however, he consented to go into the pub while his friend refreshed, but not a drop would he touch himself. Bendy's Good Templar companion urged him not to pass over the threshold of the house of sin, but this only roused the old gladiator's obstinacy. He said he knew how to take care of himself, and in he went, leaving the sorrowing Good Templar outside. Presently that patient watcher was startled by sounds of convivial merriment, in which he thought he detected Bendy's voice. At last, unable to stand the suspense any longer, he peeped in, and the sight which he saw horrified him. For there was Bendy with a jug of old Nottingham ale

before him, telling with great gusto the details of his fights with Caunt and Paddock. Deeply shocked, the Good Templar exclaimed, "Oh! Mr Thompson, this is indeed sad. I see Satan has entrapped you again." To which the hilarious convert replied, "Bother owd Satan! He may go to hell and take you with him!" The Good Templar fled, horror-stricken at such blasphemy, and Bendigo's connection with the noble army of total abstainers was abruptly severed. But he came back again to the fold penitent, and off and on he kept with them to the end.

In the month of August 1880, when in his seventieth year, Bendigo had the misfortune to fall downstairs in his own house, fracturing three of his ribs, and a bony splinter of one of them perforated the lung. From the effects of this serious accident he never recovered, and on Monday, the 23rd of August, he passed away, with his hand clasped in that of his life-long friend, Harry Paulson, as brave and good-hearted an old gladiator as himself.

X

HAMMER LANE AND YANKEE SULLIVAN

UNTIL recently the British Prize Ring did not take kindly to American soil. Prize-fighting according to English rules, in which fair play is an essential element, found little favour with Brother Jonathan. Besides, the revolver, the bowie-knife, the knuckle-duster and the slung-shot were such popular weapons in the States that a contest with nothing more deadly than bare fists no doubt lacked the excitement necessary to secure popularity.

The pioneer of pugilism in America was William Fuller, of Norfolk, a pretty fair heavy-weight, who fought four recorded battles in the Prize Ring. He was beaten by Jay, but in the return match was victorious. Then

he fought a draw with Tom Molineaux, the Black. This was in 1814, when the terrible Black was no longer at his best. But when they met a second time Fuller was beaten after a desperate fight of eighty-eight minutes—not a very brilliant record, but it was good enough for the States, to which Fuller made tracks in 1818. He speedily knocked the conceit out of two or three big New York rowdies, who thought they could fight, and then started a gymnasium, which proved an immense success.

Fuller was the son of a yeoman farmer in Norfolk, a good-looking, presentable man, with the manners and address of a gentleman. In a very short time he occupied a position in New York similar to that held by Gentleman Jackson in London. His gymnasium and sparring saloon were well attended, both became popular, and William Fuller "made his pile." But though under his auspices the noble art became fashionable among the aristocracy of the Empire City, he failed to turn out any professional performers of ability. The Yankee bruisers

were a very poor lot, as Deaf Burke proved when he went out in 1837, for he licked O'Rourke and O'Connell, the best they could produce against him, with consummate ease. Ben Caunt visited the States four years later, and could find no one to take him on. Jem Ward, too, scared them all by his science; so did Barney Aaron, and one or two lesser lights of the Ring. I don't think I am far wrong in stating that no genuine Yankee has ever made a mark in the Prize Ring. Such successful bruisers as America has produced have been either men of colour or Irishmen.

The best specimen of her fistic prowess that Columbia ever sent to England, till Heenan came, was Charles Freeman, the American giant, who stood 6ft. 10½in. and scaled 17st. in condition, and he was "no great shakes," for though Charley won his two fights with the Tipton Slasher, it was owing to his immense height and strength, and not to any merit as a boxer. But previously to Freeman's visit there was another so-called Yankee who for a brief

space caused some small stir in the Prize Ring.

It was on the 13th of December 1840 that this gentleman thus announced to the Fancy his presence in London, and the reasons for it:—"A match has been made on behalf of a sturdy American named James Sullivan to fight any 11st. man in England for £50 a-side, to come off in two months. £10 a-side was put down at Jem Burn's on Monday last. Owen Swift is to select the opponent, but he has not yet determined his choice. The second deposit is to be made to-morrow (Monday) evening at Owen Swift's, the Horse Shoe, Tichborne Street. Sullivan weighs nearly 12st."

Who, then, was this James Sullivan? and what had he done? These were the questions that were asked as soon as the announcement I have quoted was published. There were certain old pals of Sullivan's in the East End who could have given some interesting and truthful details of his career had they chosen to do so, but for

good and sufficient reasons they kept their knowledge to themselves, and James Sullivan was sprung upon the public as a genuine Yankee, though, as a matter of fact, he was no more of an American than Deaf Burke or Owen Swift. The man was born at Saffron Hill of doubtful parentage; but his real name was, I believe, Frank Amor, though he went by various names during his chequered career. One thing, however, is certain, he had got into trouble as a lad, and had been sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. He obtained his ticket-of-leave at the end of eleven years, and migrated from Botany Bay to America. He had been a promising youngster with the gloves before he went away, and, I think, had fought one or two battles under the auspices of the East End Fancy. At anyrate he took up the profession of pugilism in the States, and, in a big fight with a man named O'Connor, for 500 dollars a-side, made such a fine show that the sporting Press of New York declared him to be the grandest fighter ever seen on the

shores of "green Columbia," and expressed a belief that there was no pugilist of his weight in the world who could thrash him. All this fulsome flattery caused the head of James Sullivan to swell with vanity, and he resolved to return to the land of his birth and pick up the fame and fortune that were awaiting him there.

Those who had seen him spar after his arrival were quite confident that rumour had not exaggerated his abilities, and that he would prove a very hard nut to crack for any man in England within half a stone of his weight. And now the next question was, on whom would Owen Swift's choice fall? Who was to defend the honour of England against this so-called Yankee?

When Swift announced his selection everyone was satisfied, for the man whom he named was Hammer Lane, of Birmingham, and no one could deny that he was, with one possible exception, the best fighter of his weight in England. The big hardware city has produced many ornaments of the Prize Ring, but I doubt whether it has

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ever sent out a better man than Hammer Lane. His real Christian name was John; his nickname came from his trade and his hard hitting. He was the eldest of five sons, all of whom, more or less, distinguished themselves in the Ring. Born on the 15th of December 1815, John Lane was early apprenticed to his father, an iron-plate and hammer-maker in Bathomley Street. His daily work was calculated to develop his muscles, and he soon grew up into a strong and sturdy lad. The elder Lane had been a bit of a fighter in his day, but it was from his mother that John inherited his fighting instincts. She was a veritable Amazon, like the mothers of Dan Donnelly, Jem Ward, Bendigo, and the two Broomes. It was she who taught her son how to use his fists as soon as he could toddle, and watched over him with the keenest vigilance all through his career in the Ring. Hammer used to say that he had learned all he knew from his mother, and that she was the best trainer he ever had. She kept a strict hand over him, too, would hardly let

him out of her sight when his work was done, and if he wasn't in by ten o'clock at night would scour the neighbourhood till she had found him. Such a respect, not to say terror, had Hammer for this strong-minded, strong-handed dame, that he obeyed her like a lamb, and it was doubtless to her rigorous maternal control that he owed his sound health and undamaged constitution.

Until he met Young Molineaux, the Morocco Prince, Hammer Lane's career had been one unbroken series of victories. Harry Ball, Bill Hewson, and the wily veteran, Jack Green, had fallen before his conquering arm before he had reached his twentieth year. Twice he had given Tass Parker a hiding, though Tass was a stone heavier than himself. Owen Swift and Jack Adams had struck their flags to him, so had Byng Stocks, the Westminster Pet. It is true that both Swift and Adams gave away a lot of weight; but they were the two cleverest fighters in London, and were heavily backed by good judges, who believed

that their fine science and ring-craft would be more than a match for the superior strength and dare-devil fighting of the heavier Brum. Hammer certainly had a tough task to thrash Owen Swift, who, though 2st. lighter than his foe, made a grand and gallant fight for over two hours. But Adams, a stone heavier than Swift, only stood before Lane for forty-two minutes, and the 11st. Byng Stocks was licked in half that time. It is only fair to the Westminster Pet, however, to say that he was limited to 10st. 10lb., quite 4lb. below his proper fighting weight, and, as a matter of fact, reduced himself to 10st. 8½lb. (only half a pound more than Hammer), though under no circumstances, in my opinion, could Stocks have altered the verdict—he was not “class” enough for Hammer.

But at last the unconquered Brum met his match in Young Molineaux, one of the cleverest fighters the Ring has ever seen, who went down to his grave with an unbeaten record. Yet even the Morocco Prince, or Jemmy the Black, as he was sometimes

called (his real name was James Wharton), wonderful fighter as he was and full of resources, was within an ace of being licked by Hammer, who took the lead early in the fight, and up to the twenty-second round looked all over like winning. Lane, fresh, strong and full of fight, was hitting like a horse kicking, and his hammer-handed blows had nearly stunned the Black. I have heard those who saw the battle tell how at that critical moment Young Molineaux, with a wild, desperate gleam in his dark eyes, like a hunted animal turning at bay upon the hunter, faced Hammer. Defeat was, for the first time in his life, staring the Morocco Prince full in the face. He had never before met such a man as this terrible Brum. Suddenly he dropped his arms, ducked his head, rushed in, got under Lane's arms, caught him round the waist, lifted him by a supreme effort of strength, and dashed him head foremost on the ground. From that sickening and crushing fall Hammer never wholly recovered, and, though he fought thirty more rounds with desperate

courage, he was never able again to get quite on level terms with his antagonist. Still, up to the very end it was a near thing, and the backers of the Morocco Prince were much relieved when, after seventy-two minutes' splendid fighting, Hammer was unable to come up to the call of "Time." Many excellent judges were of opinion that if the men had fought a second time the result would have been different. I do not, however, agree with them, for the Black was unquestionably Hammer's master in science and generalship, and in the long run these are the qualities that tell when strength and courage are equal.

But as Young Molineaux had married, settled down as a publican in Manchester, and formally retired from the Ring, it was admitted that there was no better man in England than Hammer Lane to do battle with the Yankee. From the very outset betting was 6 and even 7 to 4 on the Brum, though it was known that, for the first time in his life, he was giving away weight, for by the articles Hammer was to confine himself to

10st. 10lb., whilst Sullivan was to fight at catch-weight. It was arranged that the battle should take place in the same ring as that between Nick Ward and Ben Caunt for the Championship, on the 2nd of February 1843. Crookham Common, on the borders of Berkshire, three and a half miles from Newbury, was the spot selected, and after Caunt and Ward had gone through their twelve minutes' farce, which ended in Ben's losing through striking a foul blow, the ring was cleared for the second brace of combatants.

Betting was still 6 to 4 on Lane, but when Sullivan stood up stripped the odds dropped a point, for the Yankee looked a very ugly customer indeed. He stood 5ft. 10in., scaled 11st. 6lb., and was in first-rate condition. His face was a thorough Irish one, not handsome, but indicative of dogged and almost savage courage. His eyes had a fierce gleam in them, and his mouth and jaw were set sternly and resolutely. Sullivan was particularly long in the arm, and his frame was very muscular and well-proportioned. His age was about two-and-thirty.

And yet, though 2in. shorter and 10lbs. lighter, Hammer did not look much smaller than his antagonist. His broad shoulders, deep chest, fine limbs and erect carriage made him seem quite a match physically for the Yankee, whilst his ruddy face, wreathed in smiles, showed a confident spirit, and his magnificent condition augured him fit to fight for his life. Lane's gay and jovial bearing was a singular contrast to Sullivan's grim and serious aspect; but, for my part, I agree with the author of *Rab and His Friends*, that "all great fechtors are sairious." I generally pin my faith on a serious fighter, for laughter and gaiety often spring from nervousness on such occasions. The Yankee soon showed that he was of the slashing and slogging order, for he went at Lane like a regular Connemara ram. Hammer fell back and stopped the blows, but the grass was so slippery that he was unable to get sufficient foothold to return them. Sullivan saw this, and pressed his man hard, lashing out fiercely with his long arms, but straight and quick though the blows were,

Lane stopped them beautifully. Then he, too, had a look in, and gave a taste of his hammer-hand; but Sullivan's guard was as good as the Brum's—not a blow of Lane's got past it. Finer defence than that of both men no one could wish to see. At last, in trying to plant his right, Lane slipped and fell.

There could be no doubt after the first round that Sullivan was a good fighter. But was he game? He had not been touched yet, but the bold way in which he faced his man seemed to indicate real grit. In the second round the question was set at rest, for in a fierce rally Hammer landed his right twice severely on the left eye, which began to swell. The Yankee did not flinch, but the severity of Lane's hitting evidently unsteadied him, for he hit several times with both hands open. The Brum, seeing this, went for him resolutely, and I can tell you that Hammer in the full flood of fight was as difficult to stop as a mountain torrent in spate. Such a pasting did he give Sullivan with both hands that the Yankee

was dazed, hit out at random without closing his fists, and seemed entirely demoralised. "Close with him, and throw him, Sullivan," shouted Harry Holt, the Yankee's second. Sullivan quickly obeyed the order, and, as he was said to be a grand wrestler, everyone expected to see Hammer flung heavily; but, to the dismay of the Yankee's backers, Lane proved to be the stronger man if not the better wrestler, and threw Sullivan apparently with ease. Unfortunately, however, the Brum himself fell awkwardly, with his right arm under Sullivan's head, and hurt himself far more than his adversary, but no one dreamt how serious the injury really was.

The fighting was fast and furious in the next four rounds. Sullivan drew first blood from Hammer's mouth, but his own face was badly marked, and there was a lump under his left eye already as big as a hen's egg. Oddly enough, though Sullivan was reckoned a slashing fighter, it was his defence that was most conspicuous. Over and over again he hit open-handed, and thus lost a chance of

inflicting severe punishment; but his stopping was admirable up to this point. In the seventh round Hammer let drive right and left with great force, but Sullivan stopped both blows on the point of his elbow; and those who were near Lane saw a sudden spasm of pain pass over his face. His right arm dropped to his side, and though he let go hard with the left, it was clear that something was wrong.

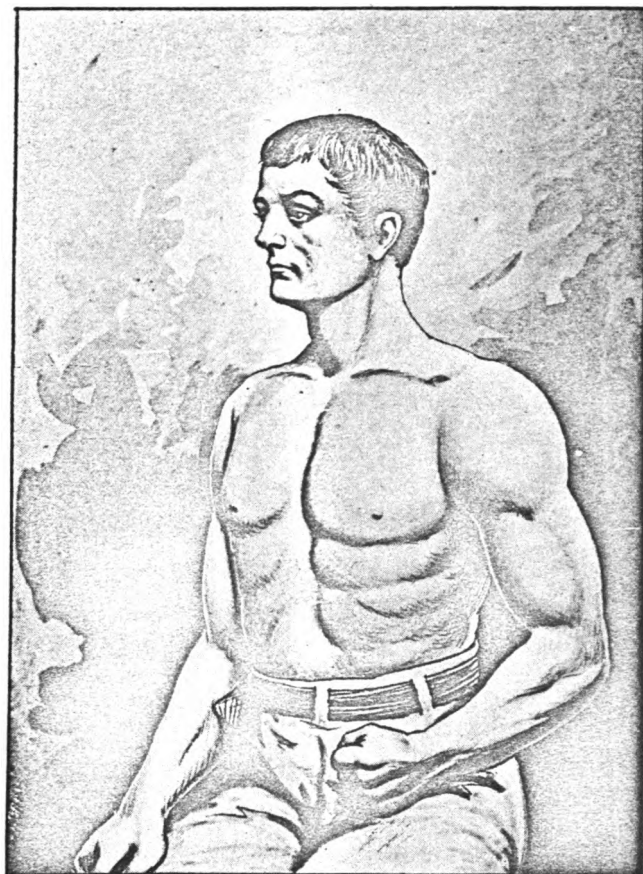
"Go in, Sullivan, he's hurt; give it to him hot before he gets right," yelled the Yankee's East End backers. Sullivan went in, but a straight, left-handed job in the mouth checked him; he charged again, and Lane fell. Hammer's friends found that his right forearm was badly swollen, and so painful that he could not bear to have it touched. As a matter of fact, he had broken the radius bone, but this was not ascertained till after the fight. Sullivan's friends, seeing Lane crippled in his hitting hand—the terrible hammer that had knocked so many opponents out of time—thought their man would simply walk in, and they roared at him to

do so. The Yankee did his best, but Lane fought like a very devil with his one arm—fought better with one hand than anyone had ever seen him fight with two. The way in which he jobbed Sullivan in the face every time the Yankee tried to come in was magnificent. No one had ever seen anything like it. The swiftness, the accuracy, the terrific force with which Hammer shot in that awful left of his astonished the spectators and bewildered Sullivan. The Yankee was simply paralysed. His friends taunted him with being afraid of a one-armed man, but, whatever else Sullivan may have been, he was certainly no coward. Though he lost his head, and hardly kept one blow out of six away from his bleeding and lacerated face, he stuck to his man most gallantly. Hammer, with superb generalship, fought on the retreat, falling back and jobbing Sullivan with merciless severity whenever he rushed in, till the Yankee's face was a horrible sight, smothered in blood, and livid with bruises. "By God, Hammer will win! He'll lick the Yankee

with one hand," cried the delighted Brums. And never in the history of the Prize Ring did any man make a more heroic and desperate bid for victory than did the crippled Lane that day. But the agony of his broken arm, and the tremendous exertion of keeping up the fight at such a pace, exhausted his strength. It was said that Harry Holt put oakum into Sullivan's hands to enable him to keep them shut, for the Yankee's open-handed hits were doing no damage at all. This was allowable then, if not expressly barred by the articles, provided the substance were not wood or metal. Anyhow, Sullivan got home some very heavy hits with his closed fists, which turned the tide of battle in his favour. Three times in succession he knocked Hammer down with slashing right-handed hits under the left eye. The Brum was all abroad. The pace and the pain had exhausted him. He had done all that a brave man could do, robbed as he was of his chief weapon. His bolt was shot, though his spirit was as good as ever. Then Owen Swift stepped into the ring, and said he

should not allow Lane to fight any more. So victory went to Sullivan after thirty-five minutes of tremendous fighting. But there was not a soul there who did not feel certain that had Hammer Lane had the use of both his hands he would simply, to use the forcible phraseology of his Amazonian mother, "have smashed Yankee Sullivan into smithereens."

The pseudo Yankee, knowing his victory to be a fluke, did not care to take on Hammer again or accept a challenge from Young Molineaux, the only other man who had beaten Lane; so he made tracks for the States, there to brag of his triumph over the best British boxer they could pit against him. For many years Sullivan was a notorious character in New York. He fought Tom Hyer and John Morrissey, Heenan's first opponent, and was beaten, though not fairly, by both. His end was tragic. He was secretly assassinated, under mysterious circumstances, by a Vigilante Committee in the Far West. There were some who thought that he deserved his fate.



NAT LANGHAM.

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XI

NAT LANGHAM

ONE evening in the month of March 1844, a young man from the country was put down at the Swan with Two Necks in Lad Lane, having travelled up to London as a passenger on the Highflyer coach from Leicester. By dint of asking his way of passers-by, the young man eventually found his way to Ben Caunt's house, the Coach and Horses, St Martin's Lane. On arriving there, he presented to the Champion a letter of introduction from Ben's old pal, Dick Cain, of Leicester, the famous light-weight, who three years before had closed his brilliant career in the Prize Ring with a victory over the celebrated London crack, Ned Adams. Dick

wrote in the highest terms of the ability of the young man whom he thus recommended to Caunt's notice. And that was the manner in which Nat Langham made his first appearance among the London Fancy.

At this time Nat was just twenty-three years of age, stood 5ft. 10in. in his stockings, and scaled, in good condition, about 11st. He was born at Hinckley, in Leicestershire, where his father was a farm labourer, and it was in the fields that Nat's early days were passed. But being a smart, intelligent lad, he thought he could do better for himself in the town than in the country. So he went to Leicester, and he was engaged by a tradesman who sent him round with a horse and cart to deliver goods to customers. Nat was from his boyhood fond of "putting 'em up," and he soon found his way to Dick Cain's sparring saloon, where he speedily attracted the attention of that eminent bruiser, who took considerable pains in teaching young Langham the noble art. How Nat profited by these lessons was apparent when, on the 9th of February 1843, he stood up

to fight a strapping countryman named William Ellis for £5 a-side. Ellis was much the taller and heavier, and had never been beaten. But Nat made an awful exhibition of him that day. He cut his big round face to ribbons, and blinded him in both eyes in less than twenty minutes, leaving off an easy winner without a scratch.

Such, then, was the young man from the country who modestly sought the patronage of Ben Caunt. It was not long before the Champion gave him an opportunity of showing what he could do with his fists. After the fight between Joe Bostock and Turner, "the Wychwood Forester," down the river on the 7th of May 1844, a purse was offered for any lads who cared for a turn-up. Tom Lowe, a stalwart coal-whipper, chucked his hat into the ring as a candidate for the purse, and Nat asked Caunt's permission to have a go at him. Ben consented, and the pair set to; Nat, having superior weight and strength against him, was very tricky, but when he did hit he made Mr Lowe well aware of the fact, and after fifty minutes'

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fighting that gentleman held out his hand and said he didn't want to go on.

Caunt was so satisfied with his novice's display that he offered to back him for £25 a-side against any man of his weight in England. More than a year, however, passed before Nat had another chance of distinguishing himself, and then it was only for a modest stake of a fiver a-side (which in those days was a sum at which no novice turned up his nose). Langham's opponent was "Doctor" Campbell, whose friends bragged immensely of his prowess; but Nat in thirty-seven minutes made such good use of that deadly left of his—"the pickaxe," as Tom Sayers called it, for he knew from painful experience its blinding powers—that the Doctor was completely physicked, and retired on the sick list.

George Guttridge, of Bourne, the "Lincolnshire Champion," was Nat's next opponent. The sum at stake was £25 a-side, and when the "Yellow-belly" came up to London after the match was made, Caunt was so impressed by his appearance that

he seriously thought of backing out of the match. But Guttridge looked a better man than he was. Game, hardy and strong he certainly proved himself, but his science was very "small pertaters" compared with that of the artistic Nat. Nevertheless it was a desperate battle. The countryman was an inch shorter than Nat, but more than half a stone heavier, and though Langham punished him dreadfully, he was so sturdy and resolute that at one time it looked as if he would wear Nat out after all, and win by sheer endurance. But Nat had a wonderful way of pulling himself together just when he seemed to have fallen utterly to pieces, and in the fifty-first round of this fight, when he appeared to have lost his wind, and to be utterly exhausted, he suddenly revived, knocked Guttridge clean off his legs, and took such a commanding lead that the Lincolnshire man never had another look in. He fought on with desperate courage, indeed, as long as he could see, but Nat's deadly props with the left soon closed up both eyes, and blinded, bruised and beaten,

brave George had to give in, after more than an hour and a half of gallant fighting.

Four battles and four decisive victories made up Nat's record in the Ring up to 1847, when he was called upon to face a far more formidable opponent than any he had yet encountered. Australia had sent over an accomplished athlete to do battle with the best man of his weight that the Old Country could produce. The new "Cornstalk" was a fine, hardy, powerful young fellow, named William Sparkes, and he not only brought with him the belt of the Australian Championship, but also cups and trophies which testified to his fleetness of foot, and proved his claim to call himself the champion runner of Australia. He had never been beaten, either in the ring or on the running path. His height was 5ft. 8½in., and his best fighting weight was said to be 10st. 12lb. He was backed by Johnny Broome, then a very big boss in the Prize Ring, who told his Corinthian customers at the Rising Sun that this young Cornstalk was just the chap to polish off Nat Lang-

ham, who, in Johnny's opinion, was dangerously clever, but had no constitution. William Sparkes was not the first aspirant to fistic fame that Australia had sent over to England. Five years before the notorious Bungaree, whose real name was Gorrick, came from Sydney with a tremendous reputation, and was to have wiped out all our English light-weights and middle-weights. How he was matched against Johnny Broome, then at the height of his fame, and ignominiously beaten I have already told. Bungaree proved such an utter fraud that English sportsmen were led to form a very poor opinion of Australian pugilism, little dreaming that a day was ever to come when the Land of the Kangaroo would send out champions who would upset the prestige of the Old Country in the ring, on the river, and on the cricket field.

Well, the end of it was that William Sparkes was matched against Nat Langham for £50 a-side. Tuesday, May 4, 1847, was the day fixed for this great international contest. A trip down the river had been

arranged, and the steamer *Nymph* had been chartered by Johnny Broome to convey the swells and the better class of ring-goers to the scene of action. But Tom Spring, Peter Crawley and Jem Burn, who were then on bad terms with Broome, took their contingent of "toffs" by the ordinary Gravesend passenger boat. Johnny was so riled at being thus robbed of his best customers that, after steaming as far as Erith, he gave orders to put the ship about and steam back to Nine Elms pier, where the *Nymph* landed her passengers, who took a South-Western train for Woking, and thus Messrs Spring, Crawley, Burn & Co. were left out in the cold.

Langham was the favourite, though only at slight odds, because his stamina was thought to be defective, and given the pluck to stand the punishment Nat would inflict in the first half-hour, the knowing ones thought there was always a good chance for the other man, inferior though he might be in science. To the end of Nat's career there were those who clung to this idea, and yet

there was only one man who ever licked Langham, and that was Harry Orme, a marvel of strength and endurance.

When the two men stood up stripped to fight, there was no longer any disposition to lay even a shade of odds on Nat, for though he had palpably the advantage in height and length of reach, the Australian was not only far his superior in strength and hardihood, but also shaped so well that it was evident he was no duffer at the game. Nat's attitude was the prettier and more artistic. There was a careless ease about the way his right rested over his chest, and his long left swung from the hip. Sparkes stood with his left arm straight out from the shoulder, with his right hand well up, and his body inclined backwards in an extraordinary manner which, though it made him hard to get at, must have rendered it almost impossible to make a quick return.

Nat began with what Ben Caunt called "his usual hanky-panky business," throwing his arms about quickly, and making feints in bewildering succession in the hope of bother-

ing his man, and getting him to let out recklessly; but Sparkes was not to be had that way, and all Nat's tricks failed to draw him. Then Nat grew more steady and serious; but though he popped in one or two little ones, his best attempts were stopped, and the Cornstalk put in a couple of body blows which made Nat squirm. The second round gave everyone a surprise. Nat led off, and landed prettily on the nose with the left. But to the amazement of Langham's backers and the joy of Broome & Co., Sparkes got his right home heavily on the body, and bringing round his left on the side of the head knocked Langham off his pins. That was a lesson to Master Nat to be cautious, and he saw that he had a very ugly customer to deal with. The fighting was very fast from this time onward. No round lasted more than half a minute. Nat led off, Sparkes made his favourite body blow, and Nat went down. There was very little damage done till about the twentieth round, then both men warmed to their work. Nat put more powder into

his left-handers, seemed to have got the measure of his man, and jobbed him with great severity on the cheek, nose and left eye. The blood trickled without ceasing from the Australian's nose, from which Nat's bony knuckles had ripped the bark. Langham shot in his blows with wonderful quickness and precision, and they left their mark, too. There could be no doubt that he was far away the cleverer fighter; but would he last? that was the question. The Australian was evidently a sticker, and game to the backbone. Unless Nat blinded him, it looked as if he would take all that Langham could give him, and then sail in and win when his adversary was exhausted. Nat was very shy of letting Sparkes close with him; but the Cornstalk got him in the grips in the twenty-second round, and threw him heavily. Langham looked much shaken when he came up for the next round, and was glad to get down as quickly as possible. For a moment it looked as though Sparkes were going to take the lead, for he got home a couple of nasty body blows, and Nat looked

weak. But Langham pulled himself together, and took a decided lead, which he maintained for several rounds, peppering Sparkes severely about the face till the Australian's face was all out of shape, and both eyes puffed and swollen.

The Australian, by hitting at the body, gave away his head frequently, a mistake which cost him dearly, for Nat seldom failed to land a stinger on the eye or ear, drawing blood from both. But though all the blood almost was drawn by Langham, it was Sparkes who scored the knock downs. Four times did he hit Nat clean off his feet with his favourite blow just under the small ribs. One of these floorers delivered in the thirty-sixth round so severely shook Nat that he was very dicky for several rounds afterwards, and his friends were extremely anxious. But by cleverly and cautiously keeping away, and going down craftily when Sparkes pressed him too hard, the wily Englishman regained his wind and strength, and then began to job his foe with frightful severity in the face till Bill's

left eye was completely closed and the right about to follow suit, whilst from the Australian's cut and swollen left ear blood was seen oozing at the end of every round. Yet Sparkes fought with such unflinching courage that his backers by no means gave up the hope of seeing him pull through. And it is just possible that the Australian might have worn Nat out and licked him as Harry Orme did, if he had not had the misfortune to break the bone of his right forearm in the sixty-second round. He had thrown Nat and fallen on him with his right arm doubled underneath him, and hence the fracture. With his chief weapon of offence useless, Sparkes stood no chance against such an able fighter as Langham, and though he made a desperate effort to continue the fight with one hand it was no good, and he got so terribly punished that Johnny Broome stepped into the ring and refused to let him fight any more. Sparkes was furious, and tried to rush past Broome and have another dash at Nat, but he was held back by his seconds, and the

sponge was thrown up. So Nat Langham was proclaimed the winner after an obstinate battle of some two hours, with one of the gamest and most fearless boxers ever seen in the Prize Ring.

Sparkes soon afterwards returned to Australia, without again tempting fortune in the arena. But Langham had yet two desperate and fiercely-contested battles to fight before he set the seal upon his fame and retired as Champion of the Middleweights. The first of these was with the redoubtable Harry Orme.

Harry Orme only fought four battles in the Prize Ring, in one of which he was beaten, yet I am sure no one will deny that he was a great fighter, and one of the very best men of his day. Personally, he was as civil and decent a fellow as I ever met, as modest as he was brave. Many a long talk have I had with him when he was landlord of the Jane Shore in Shoreditch; and though it was very hard to get him to say anything about himself and his own exploits, he had plenty of interesting yarns to tell

about his contemporaries in the Ring, and I don't think I ever heard him say a bad word of anyone. Harry's parents were respectable people in the East End, who lived at Old Ford, near Bow, and from his birth to his death Harry Orme was an East Ender, never left that quarter of London, and was thoroughly imbued with the local antagonism to the West End. It was this rivalry between East and West that was the cause of Harry's first fight.

Jem Burn, the "Great Panjandrum" of the West End Fancy, had a big, strapping youngster named Aaron Jones, whom he offered to back against any novice for £25 a-side. Some of the leaders of sport in the East End thought this a good opportunity for trying the mettle of *their* novice Harry Orme, and the two lads were matched. Jones was much the taller man, and the more skilful boxer; but the dogged, obstinate courage and tremendous strength of the East Ender were too much for him, and after a desperate ding-dong fight of two hours and forty-five minutes Aaron had to strike his flag

Orme was certainly badly punished; but in beating a man taller, longer in the reach, a shade heavier, and much the better favourite in the betting, he had done all that was expected of him, and his friends resolved to quietly bide their time, and when that time *did* come, to play for a good stake. Their confidence in their champion was shown by their selection of the unbeaten Nat Langham as his antagonist, and the two were matched to fight for £50 a-side.

The 6th of May 1851, just after the opening of the first Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, was the day fixed for this interesting contest. A trip down the river was arranged, and the steamer *Queen of the Thames* was chartered to convey the Fancy to the field of battle. It was a quarter past four o'clock when the two heroes of the day entered the arena. Orme was esquired by Jemmy Welsh and Jack Grant, the last-named of whom was then at the zenith of his fame, for he had sealed his glory by his victory over Alec Keene, and had not yet

met his master in Tom Sayers. Langham's seconds were D'Orsay Turner and Johnny Hannan.

The respective weights of the men were said to be 11st. 5lb. and 11st. 2lb., Orme having an advantage of 3lb., but the general impression was that Harry was at least half a stone heavier than his adversary.

Langham had a considerable advantage in height; he was upwards of 5ft. 10in., whilst Orme measured but 5ft. 7½in. But in every other physical respect Harry was superior. He looked, indeed, a tremendous mass of strength. His arms were enormously thick and muscular, his deep, broad chest was matted with coarse black hair; his skin was a darker brown than a gipsy's; from head to foot he looked massive and formidable, the very embodiment of brute power. Langham was fine and fair in skin, clean built, with handsome shoulders and arms, good length of reach, and active pins. His attitude was artistic—the left well up and forward, the right playing easily across the mark, covering the short ribs and ready for

stop or delivery. Orme, on the other hand, stood firm and square, his elbows rather high, his fists level and almost square—an ugly and ungainly posture. Harry seemed a little flurried and worked forward, whilst Nat shifted and retreated before him coolly and steadily. Orme let go his left, which Nat stopped, and caught Harry sharply on the cheek bone; following his man in the bustle, Nat reached him slightly with the right, when Orme ducked his head, turned clean round, and rose outside the ropes amid roars of laughter from the spectators. Harry looked uncommonly foolish standing there outside the ring, with Nat grinning and beckoning to him to come inside. Very sheepishly he clambered in, then, apparently, the humour of the situation struck him, for his grave, dark face expanded into a smile. But he soon grew serious and attacked his foe resolutely. Nat, however, stopped his blows with consummate ease, and in return landed hotly with his left (the “pickaxe” as Tom Sayers, who had felt its force, called it) on the nose and mouth, drawing blood from

both, and thereby winning the first event. Then came some sharp fighting at the finish of the round, in which Harry was severely peppered about the frontispiece, but he got in *one* heavy right-hander on the body, which, perhaps, did more real harm than all Nat's flips in the face.

It was evident that Orme had the office to force the fighting, and, if possible, sew Nat up with heavy body blows, for Langham's constitution was weak, and the way to settle him was to inflict internal injuries. This, however, was all very well in theory, but in practice Orme found that he could not get at Nat's body, whilst Nat kept nailing him with unerring precision in the face. Langham's game was to draw his man on and job him with the left as he came in, and very cleverly he played his game; but though he hit straight as an arrow with the left, and apparently hard, he did not seem to leave much mark on Harry's cast-iron visage. Blood, indeed, Nat drew every round from his adversary; but when Harry's seconds had passed the sponge over his face

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there was not much left to show that Nat's fist had been there.

It was not until the sixth round that Langham's blows began to tell visibly. He shot in one very hot one on the right eye, which instantly raised a mouse; a second later the left eye received a similar visitation, and Orme was blinking like an owl in the sunshine, whilst his nose, from repeated raps, was as red as old Simon the Cellarer's. Harry fought desperately, and tried hard to get home some of his terrific body blows, but Nat was so wary and watchful, so quick with his guard, so nimble on his pins, that Orme could not land a fair smack to save his life, and all the while Nat, as he retreated, kept jobbing his man fearfully in the face till Orme's features were unmistakably disfigured. Yet Harry did not seem to mind this punishment a little bit. His strength and resolution were unimpaired; on he came doggedly. In the eighth round he at last got in a heavy dig with the right on Nat's ribs, but straight as a rifle bullet came Nat's left full on the nose, a smashing hit which sent

the blood literally flying from Harry's nostrils, and made him reel; whilst he was yet on the stagger Nat lunged out with the right, and down went Orme on his nether end, plump. First knock-down for Langham, who had thus won the first two events, and was cheered to the echo by his friends.

Orme alarmed his backers by the way in which he coughed, as though something were seriously wrong with his wind; but he soon shook that off, and finding that Langham would not force the fighting, dashed in again, only to be hit severely about the head and face, and when the round finished he was down, bleeding from the mouth, nose and right eye.

Betting was now 7 to 4 on Langham, and the East Enders were looking blue, but Orme himself was not a bit dismayed. In the eleventh round, after some rapid exchanges, Nat planted his left sharply on Harry's right eye, raising a mouse to match the other disfigured optic. Then with a rush Orme was on to him, got Langham in his arms, and after a long struggle, held him by the

crook, forced him over, and from his hip threw Nat on his neck and head, lending his whole weight to the impetus of the fall. It was a crushing upset, and no mistake, and Langham was picked up by his seconds quite stupefied. "It's all over! that's done him!" shouted the East Enders. But it was not by any means all over, as the sequel proved.

Langham came up to time, loose in the knees evidently, and with a puzzled, dazed look on his face, but he had not lost his senses or his style. Orme could not get at him, and he fell on "the saving suit."

From that time forward Nat fought prettily on the defensive, but was in evident distress, and never entirely shook off the effects of that fearful throw, which put quite a new complexion on the fight.

Harry tried hard to push his success, and gave his foe no rest, but the wily Nat managed to drop a nasty one on both the left and right eye and then dropped. Orme kept his temper well, only showing his contempt for Langham's tactics by putting

his tongue out at him and pointing at him scornfully as he lay on the ground.

It was Nat's object now to blind his man—there lay his only hope of victory—and very cleverly he kept pegging away at the eyes till Orme's right optic was entirely closed. But Nat could not manage to shut up the other eye, and Orme's great strength and endurance enabled him to take all that Nat could give him, and go on doggedly with the view of wearing Langham's strength out. Over and over again Nat fell so weak that it seemed impossible that he could come up for another round, but he *did* come up, and, feeble though he was, managed to land a dangerous tap on or about Harry's seeing eye.

When the fight had lasted upwards of two hours and a half Orme turned sick; he was almost blind, too, and, game though he was, he told his seconds he could fight no more. But just at that moment the practised eye of Jemmy Welsh (his second) saw Nat's head fall limp on D'Orsay Turner's shoulder, and he whispered in

Harry's ear that Langham had cut it, and that Orme, therefore, had only to toddle to the scratch to be proclaimed the victor. Orme pulled himself together and went up, but found that there was life in the old dog yet. Nat not only toed the scratch, but pecked away viciously, though feebly, like a dying game cock. There wasn't much powder behind Nat's blows, but still they kept Orme out, and one smack in the one hundred and eighth round sent Harry down. When he was lifted by his seconds Orme seemed senseless, his head drooped on his chest, and there appeared to be no more fight left in him. But thanks to his own splendid constitution, and the clever handling of his seconds, he came to in a miraculous manner, and seeing that Langham was in no better plight than himself, staggered in, punched away, and Nat fell.

Both men were now so utterly exhausted that the spectators cried, "Take them both away—they can't fight any more." But neither combatant would consent to that, though all Nat could do was to lift up

his left and push with it, and Harry was not much better, except that his weight enabled him to push harder than his adversary.

When they came up for the one hundred and seventeenth round it was with difficulty that both kept their feet, so weak were they. Langham feebly pushed out his left, Orme stepped back. Nat again made a shove, evidently not knowing how far his man was from him, and coming forward with the impetus of his own movement, fell on his knees and hands. His seconds ran up to him, but it was all over. Nature was exhausted, the gallant spirit could animate the flesh no longer, and so after two hours and forty-six minutes of the gamest fighting ever seen, Nat Langham was beaten.

It was the only defeat he ever suffered, and it was so nearly being a victory that Nat's reputation was rather heightened than lowered. How in his next battle he defeated Tom Sayers, and had the proud distinction of being the only man that

ever vanquished the immortal hero of Farnborough, I have told elsewhere in these pages. Of his ridiculous fight with Ben Caunt the less said the better. The two men, who till then had been lifelong friends, were provoked by jealous and nagging wives into a quarrel which they chose to settle by wager of battle. The combat was not creditable to either, least of all to Langham, who never once stood up to his man fairly, though, like Bendigo, he punished him badly. It ended in a draw, and I am glad to say that the two men not long afterwards buried the hatchet and were friends again as of yore.

As a sporting publican, Nat gained even greater celebrity than as a prize-fighter. A man need not be very old to remember "Ould Nat" during his tenancy of the Cambrian Stores, and the Mitre in St Martin's Lane. As a financier in affairs connected with the Prize Ring his name stood high with everyone except the professional pugilists, who, rightly or wrongly, had an idea that whenever a match for,

say, £50 a-side was made at the Cambrian Stores, Nat used to get at least three times that amount out of the swells who patronised his house. For he would ask a dozen "toffs," perhaps, to subscribe, and not one of them would know how much the others had given towards the stakes and training expenses. But what the pros. used to grumble at most was, that when a couple or more of them were sent for, to have a set-to with the gloves before a few of the right sort, Nat never allowed the swells to reward the performers. He collected the money himself, and gave it afterwards to the bruisers, *minus* his modest commission, which usually amounted to fifteen shillings out of every sovereign! Not that Nat was alone in this respect, for, with the exception of Jem Burn, Owen Swift, Peter Crawley, and one or two more, "they all did it." And the pros. dared not make any protest, for, if they had, there would have been a black mark placed against their names, and they would never again have been allowed to have even a

mutilated share of any good thing that was going.

Nat, as those who knew him will remember well, had a sort of impediment in his speech, talked as if his mouth were full of pebbles, and, as Dan Dismore used to say "for all the world as if he had got a hot spud on his tongue." But for all that he had the knack of blarneying his Corinthian patrons till he could get pretty nearly anything he wanted out of them. And he never did a cleverer stroke of business than when he started his famous convivial and sporting club, the Rum-pum-pas. Mr John de Rougemont was the first president, and, in virtue of his office, was custodian of the records of the society. Among the earliest and most prominent members of the club were Lord Caledon, Lord Verulam and his brother, that fine sportsman, the Hon. "Bob" Grimston, Captain Hope-Johnstone, the Hon. "Billy" Duff, Lord Edward Russell ("Handsome Jack"), Captain William Peel, "Fatty" Sutherland, and other gentlemen well known on the turf and by the ring-side thirty or

forty years ago. The members used to meet on Wednesday evenings, and a novel feature of their gatherings was that they dined inside a regulation 24ft. square ring. It was a tremendous squeeze sometimes to get all the company crowded into that narrow space, but the tighter the fit the merrier the company. Nat Langham acted as M.C. on these occasions, and among the constant frequenters, besides those I have already mentioned, were Mr Roger Eykyn, Messrs Brown and Harris of the Stock Exchange, Mr Keen the famous mustard man, Bishop, the well-known gunmaker of Bond Street, Colonel Sharpe, and a bootmaker in the Colonnade whose name I have forgotten, whose boast it was that he had not missed a prize fight for five-and-twenty years. The poet laureate and chief songster of the club was Phil Benjamin, who had a fine voice, and could render "Tom Moody," "Old Towler," and "Dame Durden" as effectively as any singer I ever heard.

The chief dish, for which the club was famous, was plum pudding. Two of these

puddings, one hot the other cold, were regularly supplied by Mrs Burnell of the King's Arms, Hanwell (who is still, I believe, living at Shepherd's Bush, where her husband is a noted canine doctor). These puddings that excellent cook sent off in good time every Wednesday, the warm one carefully wrapped in flannel and standing on a hot-water plate, in charge of her husband, who, under the direst penalties, was enjoined to deliver them safe and sound at the Cambrian in time for the dinner.

They sat late did these jovial Rum-pumpas, and the artful Nat frequently beguiled them into an all-night session by promising them a merry little mill in the morning between two lads well-matched in weight, age and science, who were ready to fight at some snug, secluded spot—usually down Epsom way—and were certain to show excellent sport. As these all-night sittings led to the consumption of much champagne at the good old prices, the wily Nat made a handsome profit out of the Rum-pumpas.

After Nat Langham's death in 1871, the club removed its quarters to Alec Keene's, the Three Tuns, in Moor Street, Soho. It continued to hold its meetings until 1879; but as many of the old members had gone over to the majority, and those who remained had lost their zest for that kind of thing now that the P.R. was defunct, it was determined to wind up the institution with a final and farewell banquet. Mr Wilbraham, who had succeeded Mr John de Rougemont as president, sent out invitations to all the known survivors of the Rum-pum-pas, to meet at the King's Head, Barnes. There was a pretty good muster. Among those present were Mr Wilbraham, the three Joyces—Bill, Fred and Cocky—Alec Keene, Jem Ward, Phil Benjamin, Bill Burnell (with the two plum puddings), Jemmy Shaw, and a few more of the right sort who did their best to revive the memories of the palmy days of the R.P.P. and make the last of its gatherings an occasion to be looked back upon with feelings of pleasure rather than regret. And so the Rum-pum-pas,

of their own act and deed, ceased to exist.

Nat died at the Cambrian Stores, Castle Street, Leicester Square, on the 1st of September 1871, in the fifty-second year of his age. As a man I cannot say that I admired him, but as a fighter he was great. Few pugilists have had to fight more desperately hard battles to win their reputation than Nat Langham, for he was terribly handicapped by a weak constitution and delicate lungs. But he triumphed manfully over his physical defects. His science and ring-craft were superb, and I do not know of any boxer who has had a more complete command of the resources of his art.

XII

JOHNNY BROOME AND BUNGAREE

No man who knew Johnny Broome in his prime as a pugilist would, I suppose, deny that he was one of the finest fighters of his weight (10st.) ever seen in the Prize Ring. And yet, for a man with so great a reputation, his fighting record was not a remarkable one. He only fought ten battles, and of his opponents two alone, Charley Jones, of Manchester, and Johnny Hannan, the crack London light-weight, were known to fame, whilst the last-named was the only one of the lot with any pretensions to be a first-class bruiser, and he was 2in. shorter and half a stone lighter than Broome. But then, as Johnny Broome defeated all his adversaries with ease, it may be urged that

he did all that he was asked to do, and what more are you to expect of a man? It was his luck to enter on his Ring career at a time when first-rate 10st. men were scarce, and the form which he displayed in his battles choked off all other men of his weight. So that we may safely say that in his prime Johnny was the best man of his weight in England. If there were a better, why did he not come forward?

There are some people who say that Tom Sayers was lucky to have appeared on the scene when he did, for if he had appeared a few years earlier he would have had to fight Bendigo, and if a few years later, Jem Mace. Well, of course, Tom was never called upon to fight any man of the class of either Bendigo or Mace, and so far he was lucky. But he thrashed the best men the ring could produce against him in his day, and I think that, even in the pick of first-class company, he would have given a very good account of himself. It was just the same with Johnny Broome. His fighting days, of course, were

over before my time, but, so far as I am able to judge, I should say that his splendid qualities as a fighter were not exaggerated by his contemporaries, and that the very best 10st. man the Ring ever saw would have found his match in Johnny Broome.

Like some other famous pugilists whose deeds I have chronicled in these pages, Johnny Broome had a very remarkable mother—a woman as strong-minded as she was able-bodied. It is said that she witnessed from a waggon her son's first fight when he was a lad of seventeen, and thus expressed her opinion of his performance, "You're a born fighter, Johnny, and you'll do great things some of these days; but I'm not going to let you fight again till you're twenty; you want to get set, my lad." And she kept to her word, for it was not till three years later that Johnny was again allowed to put up his hands inside a 24ft. ring.

How deep was the interest she took in her son's battles, and how competent she

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was to advise him may be gathered from the following extract from a letter which she wrote to him on the eve of his fight with Johnny Hannan:—"Mind and use your left, and keep away from your man till you find you can reach him with safety; avoid being thrown as much as possible, but don't fail to give Johnny Hannan as many bursters as you can." Her son strictly followed that sound advice and won a brilliant victory.

Johnny Broome was a remarkable man in many ways outside his profession as a prize-fighter.

Born at Birmingham on the 14th of March 1818, he soon gave evidence of the possession of phenomenal athletic gifts. While he was yet a boy he could ride a pony at full gallop, standing on its bare back, and hence he gained in the neighbourhood the nickname of "Young Ducrow." The Old Ducrow—Andrew of that ilk—was the most famous acrobatic horseman in the world, and for years astonished and delighted Londoners by his feats at Astley's

Amphitheatre. Johnny was by trade a hammerman, and his work at the anvil strengthened and developed the muscles of his splendid chest and arms. I suppose there has seldom, if ever, been seen in the Prize Ring a finer combination of activity and strength than Johnny Broome. And as a horseman he was first-rate to the end of his life. He entered his own horse, Eagle, for the Grand National, rode it himself, and came in fourth. In the hunting-field, too, he could hold his own with the best, and was sure to be in the first flight with the crack packs of the Midlands when he rode to hounds, as he often did in the zenith of his fame, for the cavalry officers at Weedon, Coventry and elsewhere were always delighted to give him a mount.

Then he was also a mechanical genius. He used to tell of a wonderful cannon he had invented, which was to throw a 60lb. shot three miles with deadly accuracy. This gun was actually constructed under Johnny's supervision, and submitted to the War Office; but the authorities there, after

testing it, rejected it on the ground that the recoil was too great. Johnny was very indignant at the decision, and declared that he had been badly treated. In short, Broome was a singularly clever all-round man, with whom it was enjoyable to have a chat, for he invariably had something to say that was worth hearing.

In physique Johnny Broome was the biggest little man ever seen in the ring. He stood about 5ft. 7in., but gave you the idea of being at least 2in. taller. In the tightly-buttoned double-breasted coat which he usually wore, he looked, with his grand chest and shoulders developed by his early occupation as a hammerman, a remarkably fine man. As a boxer he was equally good with both hands, his attack was terrific, a regular hurricane fighter he was, and so quick on his legs that he could spring in and deliver a crushing blow and be away out of reach before his bewildered opponent could realise what had happened. As a wrestler he had few equals, and no superior. As strong as a horse, and as

active as a monkey, I know no man except Bendigo with whom to compare him.

In the year 1841, Johnny Broome was at the height of his fame. The decisive manner in which he had defeated Johnny Hannan, the best man he ever fought, had proved that he was a "clipper," and no one would take him on. His admiring friends subscribed a handsome sum for a golden belt to be presented to him on his retirement from the Prize Ring. For Broome, who was now installed as landlord of the Rising Sun in Air Street, Piccadilly, was about to take to himself a wife, and had announced publicly that after that event he should fight no more. But in order that his patrons might have a chance of seeing him perform once before his final retirement, Johnny issued a challenge to the world, offering to fight any man breathing for from £200 to £500 a-side, and give half a stone. For three months this challenge was unaccepted, and then there stepped forward a bold warrior, who offered to take Broome on at these terms

for £300 a-side. This man was John Gorrick, better known as Bungaree, who had come over from Australia to fight the best man of his weight (10st. 7lb.) that the Old Country could produce.

The Australian had arrived in London some months previously, and his approach had been heralded by long quotations from Sydney papers advertising his prowess, which had found their way into *Bell's Life*. According to these, Gorrick was the most extraordinary fighter the world had ever seen. He was said to have a most terrible hit with the right, which defied the skill of the cleverest boxer to stop it. He had thrashed with consummate ease the two champions of Australia, one of whom, Chalker, had issued a challenge to the world for £1000 which had not been accepted. Both these men were giants, yet Gorrick had beaten them in marvellous style, and had similarly served every other man who had ventured to stand up to him. Australia was so little known in those days, except as a penal settlement,

that many people expected to see in John Gorrick an aboriginal black, and were quite surprised to find that he was a white man. He was, in fact, the son of an English soldier, one of the early military colonists to whom the Government granted land in return for their services in keeping order among the convicts.

John Gorrick put on a lot of side when he first appeared in London, and talked very big of what he was going to do. His only doubt was whether any man in England would have the courage to face him. He found an enthusiastic backer in Mr Marsh, a merchant from Sydney, who had seen Gorrick fight, and believed him to be invincible. This gentleman introduced the ambitious "Cornstalk" to Peter Crawley, who advised him not to fly at too high game at first, but to test his powers on a trial-horse. For this purpose Ned Adams was selected, and a match was made between him and Gorrick for £50 a-side. Previously to this there had been a dinner at Crawley's, The Queen's Head and French

Horn in Smithfield, at which the Australian had been formally introduced to the most prominent members of the London Fancy. Vincent Dowling, the popular editor of *Bell's Life*, and one of the best friends the Prize Ring ever had, was in the chair, and it was he who suggested that Gorrick should adopt some *nom de guerre* suggestive of his Australian origin. Gorrick asked if Bungaree would do, explaining that this was the name of a famous black chief, who was notorious in and around Sydney. Dowling said, "Capital; the very thing," and as Bungaree was John Gorrick thenceforward known in the annals of the Prize Ring.

Ned Adams at his best was one of the cleverest 9½st. men of his day. But he took too much out of himself before his frame was matured, and consequently failed to keep that position in the ring to which his abilities entitled him. He fought six great battles before he had completed his eighteenth year, and beat such men as Tom Smith (the East End Sailor Boy),

Jack Forsey, of Leeds, and Tom Maley. The only man who had ever beaten him was Dick Cain, of Leicester. Ned was giving away nearly a stone to Bungaree, and perhaps it was just as well for him that his health broke down in training, and that the match had to be abandoned.

Then it was that Bungaree turned his attention to Johnny Broome, but Johnny had just married, and had promised his wife that he would fight no more. As this, however, was an exceptional case, in which the honour of England was at stake, the young wife consented just for that once to let her husband fight in the ring. So, after some haggling and wrangling, for Johnny always wanted to have the best of a bargain, a match was arranged between the two for £300 a-side.

There was the most extraordinary diversity of opinion amongst the leading lights of the P.R. who had tested the Australian with the gloves. Owen Swift believed that Bungaree would have licked Jack Randall (the king of the light-weights) in his best

day. Jem Ward, on the other hand, thought the Cornstalk an impostor, said he couldn't box a bit, and that Broome ought to lick him with one hand. There were others who were of Jem's way of thinking, but they were in a minority, for Gorrick's friends said their man was keeping his real form dark, and was not such a fool as to let the world know what he really could do. Among those who believed in Bungaree were such excellent judges as John Gully and Ned Painter, both of whom backed him heavily. Gorrick considered the fight a certainty for himself. He thought his fortune was made, and talked about the purchases he meant to make out of his winnings. Amongst other items were one or two racehorses. He looked in at John Scott's stables one day, and said in a lordly way that he should probably want to buy one or two good bits of blood stock to take back to Australia, but would let him know definitely after the fight was over. The 27th of May 1842 (the day after the Two Thousand) was the date fixed for the com-

bat, and in order that the cream of the sporting world might view it, a place within easy distance of Newmarket was selected as the scene of action. The interest excited by the battle was extraordinary. Old ring-goers said they remembered nothing like it since the two great fights between Cribb and Molineaux; for the sporting public could not get out of their heads the idea that Bungaree was a foreigner, come to wrest the championship of the light-weights from the English holder. The spot selected was Mildenhall in Suffolk, and the crowd was immense.

True to his bragging spirit to the last, Bungaree sported as his colours a gorgeous light-blue flag adorned with brilliant yellow cobs of Indian corn, and in the centre a medallion containing his own portrait, with the motto "*Advance Australia! Who'd have thought it!*" And when Johnny Broome's seconds were lacing his boots, Bungaree, who was first dressed, called out, "Hurry up with those boots. Why, I shall lick him in less time than it takes you to

lace them." When at last the two met in the centre of the ring, and shook hands across the scratch, the Australian said contemptuously, "Well, here you are at last, I mean to thrash you inside a quarter of an hour." Johnny laughed and replied, "Couldn't you make it half an hour, just to please these gentlemen who have come so far to see the fun?"

The Australian looked well—there could be no mistake about that—though from the fact of his wearing long white flannel trousers in place of the usual tight-fitting drawers, it was impossible to tell what he might be like below the waist. He stood 5ft. 8½in., and scaled about 10st. 8lb. His face was brown, with that sun-dried appearance with which we have since become so familiar from repeated visits of our Australian cousins, his eye was clear and bright, his athletic, well-proportioned frame showed fine muscular development, the shoulders were well knit, the chest big and arched, and connoisseurs noticed that the man had a peculiarly long fore-arm. His features

were good, and his appearance altogether prepossessing, though critics found fault with his attitude, for he stood very square and stiff. Such then was the first Australian athlete that ever stripped for a physical contest in England. But fine and large as Bungaree bulked, Englishmen had no reason to be ashamed of their representative, for Johnny Broome looked the perfection of an athlete. Trained to the hour, his flesh hard as nails, the glow of health on his ruddy face, every muscle splendidly developed on his huge chest, powerful arms, and broad back, his legs like towers, his loins and thighs grand—the Brum was a glorious picture of strength and activity combined. Johnny's attitude was far more easy and graceful than that of his adversary, and he seemed far more at home. Never a laggard, Broome was not long before he opened the ball. He stepped round the Australian like a cooper round a cask, kept Bungaree on tenter hooks, then made a clever feint with his left. Up went both Gorrick's hands to guard his face, and in

went Johnny's right on the mark with a vim which made Bungy grunt, and roused his wrath. He hit out savagely at Broome, missed, overbalanced himself, and Johnny, dashing in, gave him a sounding smack in the face, closed, lifted his man round the waist, and flung him heavily.

Bungaree had controlled his temper by the time he came up for No. 2, and was outwardly calm. But his calmness was soon ruffled, for Johnny, springing in suddenly, landed a terrific left-hander between the eyes, and was out of reach before the Australian knew what he was about. Then Bungaree, seeing Johnny laughing, grew mad, rushed at the Brum, lashed out fiercely, missed, and again Johnny nailed him hard on the frontispiece. There was no return from Bungaree, who looked dazed. Johnny buzzed round him like a wasp, till the Australian was giddy with trying to keep facing him. Then in came Broome with that awful left of his on the nose. For the life of him Bungaree could not get in a blow in return; Johnny was too nimble for

him. In again came Broome; bang went the left into Bungy's face, and the Australian wildly clutched at his adversary's arm. Broome, nothing loth to have a wrestle, closed, and there they were, each with an arm round the other's body, whilst with the other hand each held his adversary's fibbing arm. Thus they swayed backwards and forwards in a close embrace, till Johnny suddenly let go his adversary's arm, clinched him, whipped him off his feet, and dashed him to the ground.

Unless Gorrick were "kidding," it was clear that he was completely out-fought and overmatched, and before long there could be no doubt that this was what was really the case. Bungaree had no idea of defence except throwing both hands up before his face, thereby leaving the whole of his body exposed, and his left seemed absolutely useless to him for hitting purposes—he had no idea of hitting except with the right—that terrible right of which so much had been heard! Now and then in the counters he did contrive to get in his right, and up

to the last he had a dangerous blow with that hand left in him, which some thought might yet turn the tide of battle, as Johnny began to show signs of distress. For the Australian was game to the backbone, and took his gruel like a hero. Twice Johnny hit him clean off his legs, but he came up doggedly, though nearly blind, and his face fearfully bruised by Broome's terrific uppercuts. It was just on the cards for a few anxious moments that Broome, who was tired with hard hitting and fast fighting, might fall weak, and then Bungaree might get in two or three of those fabulous right-handers. But Johnny's distress was brief. He soon got his second wind, and simply made an exhibition of Bungaree, who, after showing himself to be a rank impostor, was hit out of time after an hour's fighting.

The wind-bag was pricked and had utterly collapsed. Bungaree's pretensions to be a first-class fighter were disposed of for ever.

Yet the Australian remained for two years in England and fought four more battles. One of them was a cross with Reuben Martin,

an incorrigible "wrong 'un." Of the other three two were with that comical black buffoon, Sambo Sutton, who taught Charles Kingsley to box at Cambridge. In the first Sambo was beaten, but in the second he decisively turned the tables on his conqueror. M'Ginty, the Scotchman whom Johnny Broome had defeated so easily, was Bungaree's third opponent, and after a complete defeat at the hands of that third-rater, the Australian, concluded, like Artemus Ward, that "fitin' worn't his fort." He quitted our shores never to return, leaving behind him a very poor opinion of colonial judgment in matters of sport.

Johnny Broome never fought again after his defeat of Bungaree, but as a backer of pugilists he became notorious. It was he who brought out his brother Harry first as a middle-weight, then as a heavy-weight, and had the satisfaction of seeing the "young un" become Champion of England.

The marvellous luck which Johnny had in backing West Australian when that famous horse was at a very long price, I think

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turned his head. He made a fortune out of the Derby winner of 1853 and—lost it. Then things went badly with poor Johnny. He was mixed up in that notorious Brighton card scandal, of which the lost Sir Roger Tichborne was one of the victims, and his name was associated with other shady transactions, which caused many of his old friends to desert him. Perhaps he was more sinned against than sinning—he always declared that he was. At last his troubles and anxieties proved too much for him, and on the 31st of May 1855 he put an end to his life. That his memory was respected by his old comrades of the Prize Ring and by sportsmen generally was testified by the large number present at his funeral. And none of those who attended the ceremony I am sure ever forgot the pathetic picture of the mother standing beside the open grave into which had just been lowered the body of the son whom she loved and admired so passionately. There was not a tear in her dry, stony eyes, not a muscle on her hard, stern face moved, though her

stalwart younger son Harry was crying like a child beside her. But for all that the woman's heart was broken and she never smiled again.

XIII

TOM SAYERS AND THE TIPTON SLASHER

EVERYBODY said it was a ridiculous match. When I say everybody, I mean, of course, the people who thought they were "everybody," and were confident that anyone who did not agree with them was a fool. In this case, however, I am bound to admit that "everybody" included nine-tenths of the sporting public who took an interest in the Prize Ring. You see it was such an utter reversal of all the good old theories of prize-fighting, such a wild, mad, revolutionary idea to match a 10st. 10lb. man of 5ft. 8in. against a 14 stunner of over 6ft., and the latter, mind you, no duffer, but the Champion

of England, who had won his title by hard fighting. For till then it had been a recognised fact that no boxer who did not come within the heavy-weight limit—12st.—had any right to aim at the Championship, or the ghost of a chance of winning it if he did. No man under 11st. 12lb. at the very lowest would have found anyone to back him for the Belt. For had it not been proved over and over again that however game and clever a little man might be, he could not give away two or three stone to an opponent with experience and courage, and a modicum of science? Those who backed Owen Swift against Hammer Lane, and Johnny Hannan against Byng Stocks, had found this out to their cost.

When, therefore, Tom Sayers, after his second victory over Aaron Jones, challenged the renowned Tipton Slasher for the Championship, nine-tenths of the sporting public, as I have said, pronounced the match ridiculous, and prophesied that if the men ever came into the ring, which was doubtful, the little one would have cause bitterly to rue

his rashness and presumption. The Slasher himself laughed at the idea of Tom's cheek in challenging him. "Why," I heard him say, "'taint only that I'm twice his size and strength, but I knows more about the game; and mark me, if we goes into the ring, you'll find that I'm the cleverer man o' the two."

Well, let us see what the records of the two men were. William Perry, the Tipton Slasher, was born at that town, in the Black Country, in 1819, and was therefore seven years older than Sayers, who was born at Brighton in 1826. The Slasher had fought ten big battles, and had licked Barney Dogherty, Ben Spilsbury, Jem Scunner, Tass Parker (three times), and Tom Paddock. He had been beaten, after a draw, by Freeman, the American giant, who stood 6ft. 10½in., and by Harry Broome. The two fights with Freeman were farcical. The Slasher was awed by the tremendous height and reach of his opponent, who was as active as he was powerful, and a splendidly-made athlete to boot. He did not attempt to face Freeman in fair stand-up fighting, though, if he had gone resolutely

at the giant, I am inclined to think he would have licked him, for the American was a bit soft, and, if tackled at close quarters, would not have held out long. However, he was good enough to thrash the Tipton on the lines on which the battle was fought. As to Harry Broome, he won his fight with the Slasher on a foul—the “big ‘un” hit his man when he was down on his knees—not intentionally, I think, but simply from the fact that, having launched his blow when Harry was falling, he could not check it. But it lost him the fight, though in any case Broome must have won if his wind had held out, for he proved himself to be a better wrestler and a better fighter than the Slasher. The Tipton’s best fight was with Tom Paddock, for then he used his long reach with great effect; and when one thought how easily he kept Paddock at arm’s length, and how he stood like a rock against all Tom’s furious rushes, hitting him back with consummate ease whenever he came in, it was difficult to see what chance Sayers, a much lighter and shorter man

than Paddock, could have against the mighty Slasher.

It was after his fight with Paddock that the Tipton claimed the Championship, as Bendigo declined fighting again. He lost the title when Harry Broome beat him; but, as Harry forfeited to him in a second match, and then retired from the ring, the Slasher again claimed the title, and had held it for four years when Sayers challenged him.

So much for the Tipton Slasher, but of Tom Sayers and his antecedents I think I shall be pardoned for giving a more detailed account. For he is, without doubt, the most famous of all British boxers. Every Englishman has heard of Tom Sayers, and to this day his great fight with Heenan is an event remembered even by persons to whom the names of all the other prize-fighters that ever lived are utterly unknown.

Thomas Sayers was born at Pimlico, in the centre of Brighton, on the 25th of May 1826. Both his father and mother were Sussex born and bred. The former, generally known as "Old Tan," from the

bronzed complexion which he transmitted to his famous son, was a native of Storrington, near Steyning, where he was born in 1793. I think he had something to do with boats at Brighton at the time when young Thomas first saw the light. At anyrate, I have heard Tom say that his own earliest occupation as a boy was pushing off the Brighton "hog-boats" from the shingly beach. In due course, however, he was apprenticed to a bricklayer, and his first "big job" was on the Preston Viaduct of the Brighton and Lewes Railway. Among Tom's mates was Bob Wade, the Dover Champion, a fighting man of considerable local notoriety, who afterwards fought Aaron Jones; and it was Bob who first gave Sayers a taste for fighting. Indeed, if I remember rightly, Sayers seconded Wade in one or two of his fights whilst engaged on the Preston Viaduct.

When that work was finished Tom came up to London, and was employed in the construction of the extensive buildings of the London and North-Western Railway at

Camden Town, a suburb with which he was intimately associated for the rest of his life. Sayers was two-and-twenty when he came up to town, and he soon made many friends there, who admired the vigorous, bulldog way in which he set to with the gloves, and the excellent fighting qualities he showed in several turns-up with quarrelsome and pugnacious Camden Towners.

At last Tom had a chance given to him of proving his prowess inside a regular roped ring for a money stake. It was only a humble fiver, to be sure, but then even pros. of standing did not turn up their noses at fivers in those days. Abe Couch was Tom's first opponent, and the fight came off down the river near Greenhithe on the 19th of May 1849. Couch weighed 12st., and I have been assured by Johnny Gideon that Tom only scaled 9st. 2lb; but I doubt whether that statement is correct. However, say that Tom weighed 10st., that would still give Couch the formidable preponderance of 2st. But despite Abe's superior size and weight, Sayers polished

him off in thirteen minutes, and did the business in a workmanlike style, which delighted his friends. I may mention here that Tom gave away weight, sometimes by the stone, in all his fights except one—that with Bob Brettle.

For more than a twelvemonth after this Tom could not find anyone to fight him at 10st., though he was not particular to a few pounds; but at last Tom Spring's waiter at the Castle Tavern, Dan Collins, took him on for £25 a-side. Dan was about an inch taller than Sayers, whose exact height was 5ft. 8½in., and a trifle heavier, though each was under 10st. They fought at Edenbridge, in Kent, on the 22nd of October 1850. Collins was very clever, and as game as they make them; but his pretty style was useless against Tom's resolute, business-like way of going to work. Nine desperate rounds had been fought in twenty-seven minutes, and then the police broke up the ring. An adjournment was made to Red Hill, and thirty-nine more rounds were got through in one hour and fifty-two

minutes, when darkness came on, and the referee stopped the fight. Both men were heavily punished, but Collins had much the larger share of wounds. Dan, however, was not satisfied, and six months later, on the 29th of April 1851, they tried conclusions again. Sayers had improved wonderfully in science in the interval—the difference in weight was greater than before—Collins scaled 10st. 2lb., Sayers 9st. 10lb. But poor Dan was quite overmatched; for forty-four rounds, occupying eighty-four minutes, he fought like a hero, but at last he had to give in, with his face frightfully bruised and both eyes nearly closed; indeed he went stone blind soon after the sponge was thrown up.

And now I come to one of the most important events in Tom's life—the one, in fact, on which the whole of his future career hinged—his fight with Jack Grant, of Southwark. Grant was unquestionably at that time a better man than Sayers, but he foolishly neglected his training and made the fatal mistake of underrating his foe.

Had Jack taken proper care of himself, and been as fit as he should have been, I feel certain that he would have thrashed Sayers, and who knows what effect such a defeat at the outset of his career might have had upon Tom's future fortunes? As it was, on that memorable 29th of June 1852, at Mildenhall, in Suffolk, Tom, by the skin of his teeth, won a very hard-fought battle, which lasted two hours and a half. I am, however, by no means sure that Tom would have won but for the accident to Grant in the last round. In the close both came very heavily to the ground. Tom fell with all his weight across Jack's stomach, and caused such severe internal injury that Grant could not stand, and had to give in.

In the following year, 1853, Jack Martin, a *protégé* of Ben Caunt's, who came, I think, from Warwickshire (not to be confounded with his famous namesake, the Master of the Rolls), challenged Sayers and got a decisive thrashing in fifty-five minutes, during which time Tom "ladled out the gruel" in rare style, though he came off

by no means scatheless himself, as his battered, one-sided visage testified. Sayers was taller than Martin, but the latter, I believe, was a pound or two heavier.

Nine months later, on the 18th of October 1853, Tom's career of conquest was rudely checked by Nat Langham, who licked him after a splendid battle of just over two hours. Nat with that deadly "pickaxe" of his, as Sayers called it, pecked away at his adversary's eyes till he had completely blinded him. It was touch-and-go, however, with Nat at the finish, and, perhaps, if Sayers had been in better condition he might not have lost after all. Langham, however, very wisely declined a second encounter. His health was delicate, and he knew very well that he could not stand another long struggle with Sayers if the latter were perfectly fit. I do not call Nat's victory a fluke, because it was won by superior cleverness and generalship, but I have no hesitation in saying that he would never have beaten Sayers again if they had met. One lesson Tom learned from his

defeat, and that was the importance of blinding an antagonist, and he made notable use of that knowledge in his great battle with Heenan.

I pass over Tom's farcical affair with George Sims, who was knocked out in five minutes, and come to his really grand battle with Harry Paulson, of Nottingham. Paulson, whom I knew well (and a very decent, civil, unpretentious, honest fellow he was), though an inch shorter than Sayers, was a perfect Hercules in build, weighing 12st. 7lb. in hard condition. He had thrashed all comers in provincial battles, and was known as one of the coolest, gamest, and most determined fighters that ever pulled off a shirt. Thrice he had fought Tom Paddock, then at his very best; desperate combats all three were. Paulson won the first, but lost the rubber.

There was, however, one point in which Sayers had the advantage. He was ten years younger than Paulson. Now a man of forty needs to have some very great superiority, either in skill or physique, to contend with success against a strong, tough,

hardy man of thirty. Youth *will* be served, as it was in this case, for, after the longest and hardest fight Tom Sayers ever had in his life, lasting three hours and eight minutes, he won the most creditable victory, perhaps, in his brilliant career.

Having thus proved himself capable of meeting and defeating a first-class 12st. man, Sayers began to cherish the ambition of becoming Champion of England. But he did not tell even his closest friends that he had such an ambition, for they would have laughed at the idea of a little one like him facing the giants he would have to meet if he went for the Belt. Tom, however, made one good friend by his victory over Paulson, who stood by him through thick and thin to the end of his days, and that was Johnny Gideon. Now, the curious thing is that Gideon had been advised by Bendigo to back Paulson for all he was worth. The odds were 7 to 4 on Harry, and Gideon laid them freely. He lost his money but he gained a life-long friend. For he took Sayers up, dissuaded him from going

to Australia, which Tom, in despair of getting any more matches on in the Prize Ring, had seriously made up his mind to do, and matched him for £100 a-side against Aaron Jones.

Aaron was a fine, slashing young fellow from Shropshire, who had licked Bob Wade, Sayers's old bricklaying pal, and had fought three terrific battles, one with Harry Orme, and two with Tom Paddock, in all of which he was beaten, but not disgraced, for it was want of stamina, not want of science or courage, that caused his downfall. Jones was five years younger than Sayers, stood 5ft. 11½in., and weighed 12st., so that he had great physical advantages over his opponent. The first fight took place on the banks of the Medway, on the 6th of January 1857, and a most desperate and determined battle it was; for three hours they went at it hammer and tongs, and both were severely punished. But Sayers had his man nearly blind when darkness fell and rendered a draw inevitable. Tom was not strong enough to finish off his foe,

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though he had him practically beaten, for Jones was all abroad, his hands were useless, and his left eye quite closed. A month later, on the 10th of February 1857, the two fought again, and again the combat was most fierce and determined. Jones was a hard nut to crack and no mistake. It took Tom two hours to do the job, but he did it, wearing his man out by his wonderful powers of endurance, and punishing him fearfully with his favourite double.

Then came the sensational event which I am about to describe—Tom's fight with William Perry, the Tipton Slasher, for the Championship.

The way in which Sayers thrashed these two 12-stoners, Harry Paulson and Aaron Jones, impressed all who saw the battles with the idea that there was hardly anything which Tom could not achieve in the way of fighting. Still, the odds on the side of the Slasher were more formidable than any Tom had yet faced. I had never seen the Tipton hero fight, but I was familiar with his physique, and he had a

great reputation for indomitable courage and terrific hitting. With all my admiration for Tom Sayers, I confess that I thought, with most people, that he had taken on too big a task when he challenged the Slasher for £200 a-side and the Belt.

There must be many veteran ring-goers still living who remember the tremendous excitement which the discussion of the pros and cons of this great match provoked. How we argued over it in the bar-parlours at Owen Swift's, Dan Dismore's, Peter Crawley's, Jem Burn's! Was it possible for the most scientific of little men to lick such a huge mass of muscularity as the Slasher? Were the resources of the noble art equal to such a marvellous feat? Well, all one could say was, wait and see. One man evidently was confident of the result, and that was the Slasher, for he staked all he had in the world on the issue. He sold his public-house in Spon Lane, Tipton, and invested every farthing of the proceeds in backing himself, the odds being 6 to 4 on him. It was to be his last appearance in

the Prize Ring, and he was determined that it should not be unworthy of his well-earned fame. He trained at Boxmoor, and worked like a horse to get himself fit, for though he laughed at Tom's pretensions, he was not such a fool as to despise his enemy or neglect any precautions against defeat. Sayers, too, conscious that this was the crisis of his career, took the greatest pains with himself, inhaling the invigorating breezes of the Sussex Downs, not far from Brighton.

One of the most delightful of William Hazlitt's essays is that on "Going to the Fight," in which he describes his journey by coach from London to Newbury to witness the great battle between William Neate, the "Bristol Bull," and Tom Hickman, the famous "Gas." And the description of the fight is far away the best—indeed is the only classic narrative of a prize fight—in our language. No one can hope to come within measurable distance of that masterpiece of English prose; nor was prize-fighting as I knew it in the fifties

susceptible of such picturesque and scholarly treatment as it was in the second decade of the century when Hazlitt wrote. Still, for the benefit of a generation which takes its pleasures luxuriously and has no conception of the hardships which its predecessors underwent in pursuit of sport, I make bold to present here a picture of the humours of a trip down the river to a prize fight forty odd years ago.

On the morning of the 16th of June 1857, under the escort of my old friend, Henry Downes Miles, author of *Pugilistica*, and then on the staff of *Bell's Life*, I drove to Fenchurch Street Station. The scene lingers vividly in my memory. The frantic, noisy, blackguardly rabble surging round the entrance to the station: the crowd of swells in fashionable shooting-jackets and cloth caps all pushing their way with fierce eagerness to the ticket-office, as hansom after hansom disgorged its fare: the awful fight for tickets: the excited mob of gentlemen, publicans, tradesmen and pugilists on the platform—the desperate attempts to repel

the assaults of the roughs who made most determined charges at the doors: the terror of the non-sporting passengers, for it was an ordinary train—women screaming and almost fainting with fright as swarms of big, broken-nosed men invaded the carriages in which they were peacefully seated: all these things come back to me vividly as I write.

Then at last the train started, and we settled ourselves down as best we could in the crammed compartment. At every station we passed it was noticed that a policeman was on duty, ready to seize the combatants if he could only identify them, but neither of them was visible. The Tipton Slasher was picked up at Tilbury, whither he had gone overnight. Sayers was, I believe, in the train, but disguised. It was a journey full of anxiety for the directors of the expedition, for it might prove no easy matter to escape the vigilance of the police in smuggling the men on board the steamer.

At last Southend was reached, and out of the train the passengers jumped, all eager-

ness to get to the ship which had been chartered for the voyage. Boats of every description came to the water's edge to carry the voyagers to the steamer, which was lying at a short distance from the shore, and the voices of scores of boatmen singing out, "This way to the steamer—'ere ye are, sir; put ye on board in a jiffey!" filled the air with discordant noise. It makes me shudder even now to recall the risks all of us ran that day. Mere cockleshells intended to hold four persons were crammed with ten or twelve. There was a stiff breeze blowing, the water was rough, and these frail craft were so tossed about that I expected every moment to be upset and find myself battling with the waves. But, strange to say, there was not a single accident, though there was a further ordeal to be gone through before we could get on board the steamer. The crush and scuffle at the companion-ladder was awful. No one who had not purchased a two-guinea ticket overnight was allowed on board. There at the gangway stood four grim and stalwart members of the P.R.,

examining the credentials of every candidate for admission. "Where's yer ticket? Can't come up without a ticket. Ain't got one? Well, fork up the two quid, then. 'Ere, Bill, take the money from this gent." As for those who could not or would not pay, they were hurled back into the boats with scant ceremony. It was a stirring and exciting scene, emphasised by much shaking of fists and the use of strong expletives. I remember hearing a cry of, "Is Tom Oliver aboard?" with an answering shout of, "Yes, here he is." "Then away with you, skipper," said the voice of one in authority—Alec Keene, I think—and slowly the paddles began to churn the muddy water into foam.

Before we had gone far there stepped up on deck, from the fore-cabin, a gentleman wearing a blue velvet cap, brown as a Spaniard, whose bluff, clean-shaven face, close-cropped hair, thick neck and bull-dog air proclaimed him at once one of the heroes of the day. It was Tom Sayers, looking hard as nails. He lay on the deck, leaning

on his elbows, with one hand supporting his head, whilst Nat Langham carefully flung a horse-cloak over him, for, though the sun shone brightly and warmly, there was a strong, sharp wind from the south-east. A crowd of admirers quickly gathered round, and in answer to constant queries of, "Feel up to the mark, Tom?" the Camden Town hero vouchsafed no other reply than a smile, which showed his white teeth. It was no time for wasting words.

On the other side of the ship, not many paces off, the huge frame of the Slasher was stretched upon the planks, his head resting on the knee of his backer, Mr Champion of the Sun, in Gray's Inn Lane. The veteran was not in a communicative mood; to all questions he answered only with a guttural grunt. He lay there, swarthy and silent as an Indian, without a shadow of expression on his battered face, whereon the scars showed like white streaks. He only moved himself when they brought him food.

It was a mixed assembly that crowded the deck and cabins, but the "toffs" predomin-

ated. There were a number of army men—officers of the Guards and of the Line—chatting of last night's opera and the coming Ascot Meeting. Sandwiches and pocket-flasks were very much in evidence, for the West End swells hardly cared to face the unknown horrors of the banquet provided in the cabin by the caterers. I had seen sundry corpulent hampers come on board, under the auspices of Barney Aaron and "Admiral" Coobidy, two noted East End purveyors, and there was another lot, of which Dan Pinxton had charge. When the pangs of hunger eventually drove me into the fore-cabin to satisfy the cravings of nature, the sight which met my eyes was appalling. Half-cold and half-cooked ribs of beef, lukewarm chickens roasted only to the pink stage, flabby veal and flabbier lettuces. My gorge rises *now* as I think of those awful viands, but in those happy days of careless youth the appetite was not squeamish, and the digestion was equal to any demand upon it. I forget now what the price charged for this repast was, but I have

a lively recollection of the bottled ale, for which three shillings a bottle was charged, whilst the wines (save the mark!), which I did not venture upon, were sold at fabulous prices. Then there were the men who paraded the decks with stone jugs under their arms, calling out, "Who's for a go of brandy?" Ye gods! was ever such brandy seen elsewhere? It was unlike anything misnamed brandy I have ever come across, except on such occasions as these. A dark-brown, opaque liquid, the ingredients of which it was impossible to guess, even if one had had the courage to explore the unsavoury mystery.

But presently a change came o'er the spirit of our dream. The knots of sportsmen who had been chatting and drinking together began to break up, and a strange silence seemed to fall suddenly on most of the voyagers. We had left the river and were steaming out to sea, round the Nore Light. It was now blowing half a gale from the south-east, and the vessel tossed and pitched and rolled in a fashion calcu-

lated to upset the equilibrium of even the oldest sailor. The effect of these eccentricities of the ship on many of the passengers was appalling. Many of them must have thought that their last hour had come, and that they were doomed, as Mark Twain says, to throw up their immortal souls. I remember that poor Jemmy Shaw, in particular, was a fearful sufferer, and his agonies were enhanced by the coarse chaff of one or two unfeeling pals, who made merry at the miserable man's expense. We "shipped it green" over and over again, and the passengers in the forepart of the steamer were drenched with salt water, but they bore that and all other discomforts with cheerful, good temper or stoical indifference, according to their respective temperaments. The fighting men on board, who were not prostrated by sea-sickness, beguiled the time by gambling on deck with dice and cards. Some artful "Johnnies" tried to work off the three card trick upon the "toffs," but without much success, for Nat Langham, Jem Burn, Owen Swift, Alec Keene and others, who had

taken the swells under their protection, had no mind to see them robbed or relieved of their superfluous cash by anyone except themselves.

After a short run to sea the order was given to "b'out ship," and it was off the Isle of Grain that the skipper dropped anchor at last. Forthwith, as if by magic, there was a flotilla of small boats swarming round the steamer, whilst I could see that the shores of the island were crowded with people. Who had given them "the office"? How could they have known the fight was to be there? Whence had they all come? You might as well ask how the vultures scent the carcass of a dying camel in the desert scores of miles away, and are round the wretched creature in swarms before the breath has left its body. Then came the horrors of disembarkation, the most disagreeable of all the discomforts associated with a trip down the river in the good old days of the P.R. The little fleet of sailing-boats that circled round the steamer took us off somehow, we hardly knew how. Nor can

I understand exactly why Providence should so palpably have interfered to save most of us from drowning, for assuredly the passengers, by crowding pell-mell into the boats, without caring whether they were filled or not, and the boatmen, by encouraging them to tumble in, and so make a bigger haul, did their best to fly straight in the face of Providence and court disaster. However, once more we all escaped accident. We were landed in water knee-deep, and then came a toilsome climb over the big, steep, stone embankment, half-covered with slimy seaweed, on which the feet slipped and slithered, whilst one ran a risk at every step of breaking one's ankle in some unseen crack in the rude masonry. At last we found ourselves in a field, lying snugly hidden from the river by the dyke. There was a fine crop of rich, long grass, which was quickly trodden down by the crowd, and it is to be feared the farmer got little hay from that meadow. Meanwhile, two more steamers from London, crowded with passengers of a pretty rough description,

had come panting up to the landing-place, and were pouring out their crowd of noisy sportsmen, whilst barges, smacks and skiffs, all crowded, were beating up for the shore in every direction.

There was a general rush for the spot where Tom Oliver and his assistants were descried hammering in the stakes. Only those who had purchased tickets for the inner ring, or wore blue tokens in their hats, were admitted within the privileged enclosure, and allowed to take their places near the ropes of the 24ft. rectangle. Bundles of straw were provided at a shilling a bundle for the swells to sit upon. All this while boys armed with dinner-knives were cutting away the long grass in and around the arena, whilst the ring-keepers, with their formidable guttapercha whips, were swearing and slashing at the encroaching crowd—like the rattle of hail came the smack, smack, smack of the whips on the tops of hats and heads, mingled with the oaths of the strikers and the struck. But the huge crowd eventually settled down into

something like order—a sloping amphitheatre of heads—those nearest to the ring lying down, those further beyond standing up, and the mob behind raised upon impromptu platforms, for which 6d. per head was charged, though whether it was always paid is questionable.

Just at this moment some scare was created by a farm labourer, who galloped up on a cart horse, and wanted to know what “we was a-doin’ of on his measter’s ground.” This gentleman was squared with a sovereign, and stayed to see the fun. When at last the two heroes of the hour, each attended by his seconds and bottle-holder, carrying carpet bags, appeared at the ring-side there were loud cheers as they flung their caps into the “magic circle.”

They had just tossed for corners, and were about to commence the contest, when there was a cry of, “The bobbies! the bobbies! Look sharp on board.” It was no false alarm, for five men in the blue coats, white trousers and glazed hats, which then formed

the uniform of the "Peelers" appeared upon the rising ground some few hundred yards away, and were seen making straight for the ring. No words can adequately describe the "skedaddle" that followed. It must have been a comical sight to anyone who had leisure to survey the proceedings—the police, for example—to see three thousand people, old and young, stout and thin, swells and roughs, all running for their lives towards the river, tumbling over one another in their frantic haste, rolling into ditches, smothering themselves with slime, plunging waist deep into the water in their feverish eagerness to get afloat once more. I laugh now as I recall the scene, though it was no laughing matter then—it was a case of the devil seize the hindmost, and none of us had time to take stock of the humours of the retreat. The great thing was to get the combatants on board the steamer, and this was successfully accomplished, to the intense disgust of the police sergeant and his men, who had evidently meant to secure the principals. As the discomfited bobbies stood

on the embankment gazing at the steamer in the offing, they were mercilessly chaffed by the sportsmen in the boats. "Yah! Mr Sergeant, you thought you'd got 'em, did you? Well, what have you got for your run after all? Yah! go home."

Once more we were afloat, "breathless and besprent with mire" most of us, and not in the best of tempers. Our skipper steered towards the opposite side of the river, and, after skirting the shore for a few miles, stopped opposite some fields, with a quiet farmhouse in the centre, from which a sheep dog rushed out and barked furiously. Here a landing was effected, and the farmer, on whose land we were, proved to be a good sort and a keen sportsman. He offered to lend a meadow at the back of a row of sheds, which sheltered it from the sight of passing ships, and, if I remember rightly, all he asked for the accommodation was a good place near the ropes, where he might have a fair view of the fight.

In a very short space of time there must have been fully three thousand people

gathered round the ring, which Oliver had again set up. The roofs of the aforesaid sheds were black with rows upon rows of spectators, who, from that coign of vantage, had a splendid and uninterrupted view of the arena. The ring had been pitched upon a far more elevated site than before; and so great was the rush of swells for the privileged enclosure, that more than £50 was realised by the sale of inner-ring tickets. It was just half-past four when for the second time the combatants entered the lists. Both men had as their seconds former antagonists, for Nat Langham (Tom's only conqueror), assisted by Bill Hayes, waited on Sayers; and Tass Parker, with Jack Macdonald, on the Tipton Slasher. The latter pair were the best seconds living at that time, and anyone who knew how much clever seconding has to do with the winning of a fight augured well for the Tipton's chances with such able henchmen to tend him.

Then came the ceremony of tying the colours to the stakes—blue, with large white

spots, for Tom, and the time-honoured old blue bird's-eye for the Tipton. And amid shouts of "6 to 5 on the Slasher," and counter shouts of "Done—take you—done," the referee held up his hand, and his clear voice was heard calling, "Time, time!"

I have often seen big men pitted against little men in the ring, but I have never been so impressed with the difference in size between two gladiators of the P.R. as I was on this occasion—it struck me far more than even the disparity between Sayers and Heenan. Never since Tom Johnson fought the gigantic and herculean Isaac Perrins for the Championship in 1789 had two men so utterly ill-matched in size been seen in the Prize Ring. The Slasher looked immense. He stood 6ft. 1in., and scaled, fine drawn, 14st. 2lb. But the mere statement of his height and weight can convey no idea of his colossal proportions. I have never seen a broader man, or one with such huge shoulder blades. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh on him anywhere. His great, gaunt, bony, powerful frame, his long,

muscular arms, his massive hips and thighs seemed to hold strength enough to defy half a dozen such pigmies as Sayers. His attitude, indeed, was ungainly, owing to a deformity in one of his legs, which was "K" shaped; but those who had seen him fight knew well with what wonderful quickness and agility he could turn and wheel, pivot-like, on that crooked pin. When he smiled the effect was ghastly, for all his upper front teeth had been knocked out, and you could plainly see on his brown, tightly-drawn skin the white seams and scars that told of grisly wounds in many a hard-fought fray. He looked the veteran all over, but a tough and hardy veteran. And no one who did not know his age would have set him down as less than two or three-and-forty, though, as a matter of fact, he was only eight-and-thirty.

When I saw him put his great arms up, and saw Tom Sayers advance towards him, I wondered how on earth the little fellow was going to get at him. But Tom looked equal to anything that was possible to man.

Johnny Gideon has assured me that Sayers did not weigh an ounce more than 10st. 8lb.; so that he was giving away 50lbs. in weight, and nearly 5in. in height. Yet Tom was cheerful, and his condition was superb. He was neat and clean-made from head to heel. There was no great display of muscle in any particular place, but the strength was evenly distributed everywhere—in the fine broad shoulders, the compact loins, the well-turned arms, the sinewy legs. Still, admirable specimen of an active and powerful athlete as he was, how was Tom going to get at that huge man-mountain with arms like Maypoles—that was the question? For the Slasher had made no secret of what his own tactics would be. He was going to wait for the "little 'un," and depend on his powers as a counter-hitter to stall off and baffle all his attacks. I heard him make that statement over and over again, and I admired the good sense of his resolve. If he had only kept to it!

But imagine our surprise—those of us who knew what the Slasher's avowed in-

tention was—at seeing him pursue a course diametrically opposite to that he had so wisely laid down beforehand. Whether the sight of his diminutive foe roused his scorn, and the thought of Tom's impudence kindled his indignation, I cannot say; but instead of waiting with the stolid contempt and confidence we had expected, the Slasher made up his mind to set to work at once and wipe out his presumptuous challenger with a single blow. On he came, lumbering with that crooked knee of his like a lame bear, and when he thought he was within range let go both hands to demolish Tom. But of course Tom was not demolished. The Slasher's terrific slogs were wasted on the empty air. I cannot help thinking that there must have been something wrong with the Tipton's eyesight, for over and over again he misjudged his distance in the most ludicrous manner, and let drive at Sayers when, even if the latter had stood still, the blows could not have reached him. But Tom did not stand still. He led the stupid, blundering old Slasher a merry dance

round the ring till, puffing and winded, the old one pulled up short and said, "Coom and foight me, and doant thou goo skirlin' aboot loike a —— dancing master."

But Tom only laughed; he was biding his time. The Slasher would not learn wisdom from experience. Knowing his own vast strength, he felt certain that one blow from his mighty fist would unsense Sayers; and so no doubt it would have done could he have got it home. But there came the rub. The nimble-footed Thomas was always out of harm's way when the ponderous blow came hurtling through the air at his head. I shall never forget the surprise and wrath of the Slasher when, after one of these ineffectual swoops, Tom stepped quickly forward and sent in his left bang on his adversary's nose with such vim that the giant gave a snort you could hear all over the ring, and a second later the blood gushed from his nostrils. Then for the first time I think the old man began to realise that there was danger ahead, for he had never

dreamt that the "little 'un" could hit so hard. And then, too, the spectators realised how Tom was going to "get at" his man—a problem which had previously puzzled everyone to solve.

As the Slasher grew tired and winded himself in his abortive efforts to get at Sayers, Tom began to let himself go. He stood up to his gigantic foe with what seemed to the onlookers the insanity of rashness. But it was soon apparent that there was method in his madness. The Tipton stepped forward quickly, and shot out a blow that would have felled a bullock; but Tom cleverly ducked under his arm, and the bewildered Slasher found himself battling with vacancy—his foe had disappeared like a phantom of the mist; behind him he heard a mocking laugh, and turning savagely, he saw Sayers capering in an ecstasy of merriment. The Slasher looked puzzled; these conjuring tricks were too much for his dull brain to comprehend. Then he shook his head—drawing from one of the crowd the sarcastic remark, "'Tain't no good

shakin' your puddin' head, Slasher. There ain't nothink in it."

Tass Parker and Macdonald again and again urged their principal to stand and wait for his man; but the Slasher thought that would be beneath his dignity; it behoved him as the bigger man to chase this bumptious little bantam and chastise him. So he went on the same old tack, pounding at the air, and getting occasionally a stinging smack in the face to remind him how hard his adversary could hit. Now and then, indeed, the Slasher stopped some of Tom's straight and swift returns very cleverly, but only once did he get one of his own terrific slogs home. The blow caught Sayers fair and square on the forehead, and he went down like a pole-axed bullock. Everyone involuntarily gave vent to a cry—half of surprise, half of consternation—the expression of intense, pent-up excitement. Those who had never seen a fight before thought that tremendous hit must have knocked Sayers senseless. But to their amazement, when "Time" was called,

the little man came up to the scratch, smiling, good-tempered, and confident as ever, and beyond a big lump on his forehead, he seemed none the worse for a blow which looked hard enough to stave in the forehead of an ox. The Slasher appeared greatly pleased with himself and displayed his toothless gums in a ghastly grin. He had got home one blow; two or three more like it would quickly end the battle. Tom read him like a book, pretended to be frightened, and lured the great clumsy Colossus on to chase him round and round the ring. It was like a scene in the old Roman Amphitheatre when the gladiator with the net and the trident flew from his antagonist armed with sword and shield, gathering up his net as he ran with intent to cast its coils round the pursuer the moment he slipped or flagged. When at last the mighty Slasher pulled up, puffing, panting, perspiring, his nimble, fresh and artful foe instantly turned and went for him, sending his lightning expresses straight as a dart into the old warrior's face with

wonderful skill and stinging severity. But though the blood ran from half a dozen wounds the Slasher did not seem to mind the blows; he would step back to his corner for a moment to have his face wiped with the wet sponge and then pursue his fleet-footed foe in the same dogged, fruitless manner as before. He appeared wholly oblivious of the fact that he was wasting his energies, and simply playing into the hands of his crafty antagonist.

Very slowly the Slasher came up for the ninth round. It was amazing how cleverly his seconds removed the marks of punishment, but it was beyond their power to conceal the fact that his strength was failing; his judgment had from the first been conspicuous by its absence. He had never had a foe like this before. All his other opponents had been big men who stood up to him; but this "d——d dancing master," this hop-o'-my-thumb, this monkey—for these epithets were pretty freely bestowed on Sayers during the battle—how was he to fight such a *thing*? And the Slasher,

in default of any better idea, continued the old game in a modified form. He did not indeed run after Sayers, because his legs were too tired; but he slogged away savagely, regardless of the fact that Sayers ducked and avoided every blow. Tom's movements were astonishingly quick; he seemed to have his whole body under such complete control that a mere motion of any part of it was enough to enable him to escape being hit. Sometimes he went up so close to the Slasher that it looked as if he must be felled by a crashing blow from that mighty arm which no guard could stop. Yet when the ponderous fist flew out, a single dexterous twist of the body baulked the giant's aim. And *then*, swift as thought, Tom's bony knuckles went ripping and slashing into the Slasher's swollen visage.

Presently the force of Sayers's hitting began to tell. Three terrific facers in the ninth round made the huge frame of the Slasher reel and quiver, till, after a long stagger, he lost his balance and fell. This

was the beginning of the end. Gladly indeed would everyone have seen the old Champion give in, for it was plain to the duller eye that he was doomed to defeat. But defeat meant absolute ruin to William Perry, and to every suggestion that he should strike his flag he grimly replied that he should fight as long as he could stand and see. So, with mingled sorrow and anxiety, we watched for the end. Sayers hit his man left and right in the face with such severity that again the giant tottered and fell. His seconds carried him to his corner and plied sponge and towel so deftly that when time was called their principal was ready to go to the scratch. But such an awful object did he look, with his lacerated lips and bulging jaw, that there were loud cries of, "Take him away, he's beaten! Send him home—don't let him fight any more! Don't you touch him, Tom, he's licked!"

Sayers stood in the centre of the ring with his arms folded, and shrugged his shoulders as much as to say, "What am

I to do if he doesn't know when he is beaten?" It was a relief to him and to everyone else when Owen Swift, stepping quickly forward, held up his hand, and called to Sayers not to hit, as he should not allow the Slasher to fight any more. The brave old giant was anxious to make one more desperate bid for victory, but Owen would not hear of it, so the sponge was thrown up and Tom Sayers was proclaimed winner of the stakes and Champion of England after a battle which had lasted one hour and forty-two minutes.

I was close to the Slasher's corner when his victorious foe came up and held out his hand. A great sob shook the beaten gladiator's vast frame as his fingers closed round the "auctioneer" which had so terribly mauled him, and there was a look of manly and kindly pity in Tom's honest eyes as he gazed at the veteran warrior whom he had despoiled of his laurels.

When it was all over the feelings of most persons in that motley crowd were of a mingled character, in which sympathy with

the vanquished champion, was, I think, the foremost sentiment. For my own part, I confess that I felt no kind of pride in the winner, and my sympathies were all with the loser. To my thinking this was the least creditable of all Sayers's victories. And yet there was no blame attaching to the gallant Thomas. He had fought the Slasher in the only way in which a man of his size could possibly fight one so much his superior in stature, bulk and weight. Nevertheless, it was hard to rid oneself of the notion that the unfortunate Tipton had not had fair play, though it could not be denied that the victory of Sayers was a signal triumph of coolness, science and agility over mere courage and brute strength.

And here, for the present, I leave Tom Sayers with all the blushing honours of the Championship thick upon him. Of his subsequent career, I may, perhaps, have something to say on a future occasion.

As to the poor Slasher, his career as a fighter was over after this ignominious defeat, for it was useless to expect that anyone

would back him again, and besides, he himself felt that he was too old to fight any more. His defeat was a terrible blow to him, for not only was the prestige of twenty years gone, but he was stripped of the Championship, and financially ruined. He had sold his public-house and staked the proceeds, with every other farthing he possessed, on the issue of the fight, so confident was he of victory. He now found himself bankrupt in purse and reputation, and that, too, at a time of life when it was hopeless to start afresh with any chance of success. But the sympathy felt for him took a practical turn. Sayers, on the way home from the fight, collected £25 from the swells on the steamer for his vanquished foe. This was augmented to considerably more than £100 in London, and a further subscription in the Midlands produced a considerable amount. Perry was thus enabled to start once more as a beer-house keeper in his native place. But he did not thrive. Never a temperate man, he now became thoroughly intemperate. Yet his iron constitution seemed to defy old age and

alcohol, and he lived to see his conqueror, Sayers, and many other bruisers younger than himself, succumb to dissipation, whilst he lingered on the scene, forgotten by the sporting world, but remembered by his fellow-shiresmen in the Midlands. Mr. David Christie Murray, who knew him well in his later life, gives this melancholy and pathetic picture of the old gladiator as his days were drawing to a close.

"He was dying when I saw him again, and his vast chest and shoulders were shrunken and bowed, so that I wondered where the very framework of the giant had fallen to. He was despised, forgotten and left alone, and he sat on his bed with an aspect altogether dejected and heartless. In his better days he liked 'a stripe of white satin,' which was poetic for a glass of Old Tom. I carried a bottle of that liquor with me, and a quarter of a pound of bird's eye. He did not know me, and there was no speculation in his look; but after a drink he brightened. When I entered the room he was twirling an empty clay pipe with a weary,

listless thumb and finger, and the tobacco was welcome.

“‘They mought ha’ let me aloon,’ he said, when his wit grew clear. ‘I held the belt for seventeen ’ear’ (I think he said seventeen but *Fistiana* is not at hand, and I can but make a guess from memory.) ‘Tum’s a good ’un. I’ve sin ’em all, and I niver sin a better. But he owed to ha’ let me be. There was no credit to be got in hammerin’ a man at my time o’ life. All the same tho’, I thowt I should ha’ trounced him. So I should if I could ha’ got at him, but he fled hither and he fled thither, and was walkin’ about me like a cooper walkin’ round a cask. ‘An’ I was fule enough to lose my temper, an’ the crowd begun to laugh and gibe at me, and I took to racin’ after him, an’ my wind went, an’ wheer was I then? He knocked me down—fair an’ square he did it. The only time it iver chanced to me. I put everything I had on that fight, an’ here I bin.’”

One must allow something, perhaps, for the little touches of artistic exaggeration which the practised writer of fiction is unable

to suppress; but, in the main that picture of the Tipton Slasher in his declining days is correct, though it was not for seventeen but for seven years, and those not consecutive, that he held the Championship. His life drew painfully to its close, and his reckless mode of living was not calculated to check the decay of his vital powers.

The end, however, came suddenly. The Slasher's health had been failing for some time; but to all appearance he had some years to live, when, on January 18, 1881, he was seized with a fit in his own house near Wolverhampton. The seizure was fatal, and he died in a few hours, having just completed his sixty-first year.

THE END

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