

C. H. Q. of Boxing

NATIONAL SPORTING CLUB.

There may be larger boxing clubs in the "National Sporting Club," but it is the acknowledged world-centre of the Science of Self-Defence. It is so frequently misquoted as "Noble Art." Although only a few years old, the National Sporting Club is to boxing what the M.C.C. is to racing, the Royal and Ancient to golf.

Rules for contests are adopted all over the world; its verdicts are accepted without question. In saying this I do not mean that the decisions of the referees are never criticised, but the man who wins a championship at the club, or its Kensington headquarters at Holland Park, acquires a title as valuable as many foreign ones, is a champion.

Every Boxer's Ambition. Therefore, one way or another, it is the ambition of every professional boxer to battle for a championship in the National Sporting Club ring. And he will not get there unless, apart from his fighting prowess, his personal character is sound.

Since the club's fame, however, comparatively few have ever been in its headquarters at King Street, London. The building it occupies is historic. It dates from the time when it was built for Admiral Lord Orford, and afterwards Lord Orford, and of what was Sir Kenelm Digby's house.

Many years later, in 1698, the first Council in the history of this club was held in the big room of the house.

The house became London's first boxing hall, under the management of David Low. It was nicknamed "The Club" because so many notable boxers resided there. One evening, it is said, six dukes dined there, not counting the staff, but each on his own account.

Giants of Other Days. This high respectability the club has inherited into the notorious "Evans' Supper Club." A hall-room, which is now the National Sporting Club theatre, was added about this time. The "Evans' Club" later took possession, and it was in 1891, when one took you inside for a look.

On the right, as we enter, is the waiting-room. Its walls are covered with prints and photographs of famous boxers, but its dominant feature is the cast of Tom Sayers' arm, above which hangs the coat worn by the English Champion, and the American, John Carner. He fought his immortal battle of thirty-seven rounds at Chiswick, Hants—not Surrey, as was wrongly stated—on April 17th, 1867.

The hall itself is a large board, which are displayed the names of the winners of "Lonsdale Championship Belts." These famous trophies are instituted by that sportsman of sportsmen, the Earl of Lonsdale, in 1888 and are greatly coveted.

The Sea-dog's Staircase. A belt becomes the absolute property of the holder if he wins it three times, which need not be consecutive. If, as holder, he is not challenged within three years. An absolute holder becomes entitled to a pension of £10 a year for life after passing his fifth year.

The first boxer to qualify for pension, though, alas, he can never draw it, was the late "Peerless Jim" Driscoll. Since then the following have won the belt outright: Bombardier, Dick Smith, Joe Fox, Johnny Adams, Tancy Lee, Pat O'Keefe, Dick Stanley, Jim Higgins and Jimmy Lee.

Pat O'Keefe scored his third victory in the middle-weight class on the night of one of London's worst air raids. He was the only boxer to qualify for pension as a bantam, and he added a "feather" belt to his honours. Jim Higgins set up a record by winning the bantam belt outright within one year and nine months.

At the back of the hall is a smoking lounge and the billiards-room, where the play is often very "hot." Now we will ascend the staircase, which members are justly proud of. Admiral Russell is believed to have taken it from the hundred-gun man-of-war H.M.S. Britannia, which was his flagship at the battle of La Hogue.

From Ring to Parliament. Next into the lengthy dining-room, with its magnificent old fireplace. The walls are covered with paintings, plates, and photographs of the great names of boxing history.

Here is a fine oil-portrait of Nat Langham, the only man to beat Tom Sayers, which he did after sixty-one rounds, and another of "Gentleman" Jackson.

Near by is a painting of John Gully, prize fighter and Champion of England, who became the Right Hon. John Gully, Speaker of the House of Commons for thirty years.

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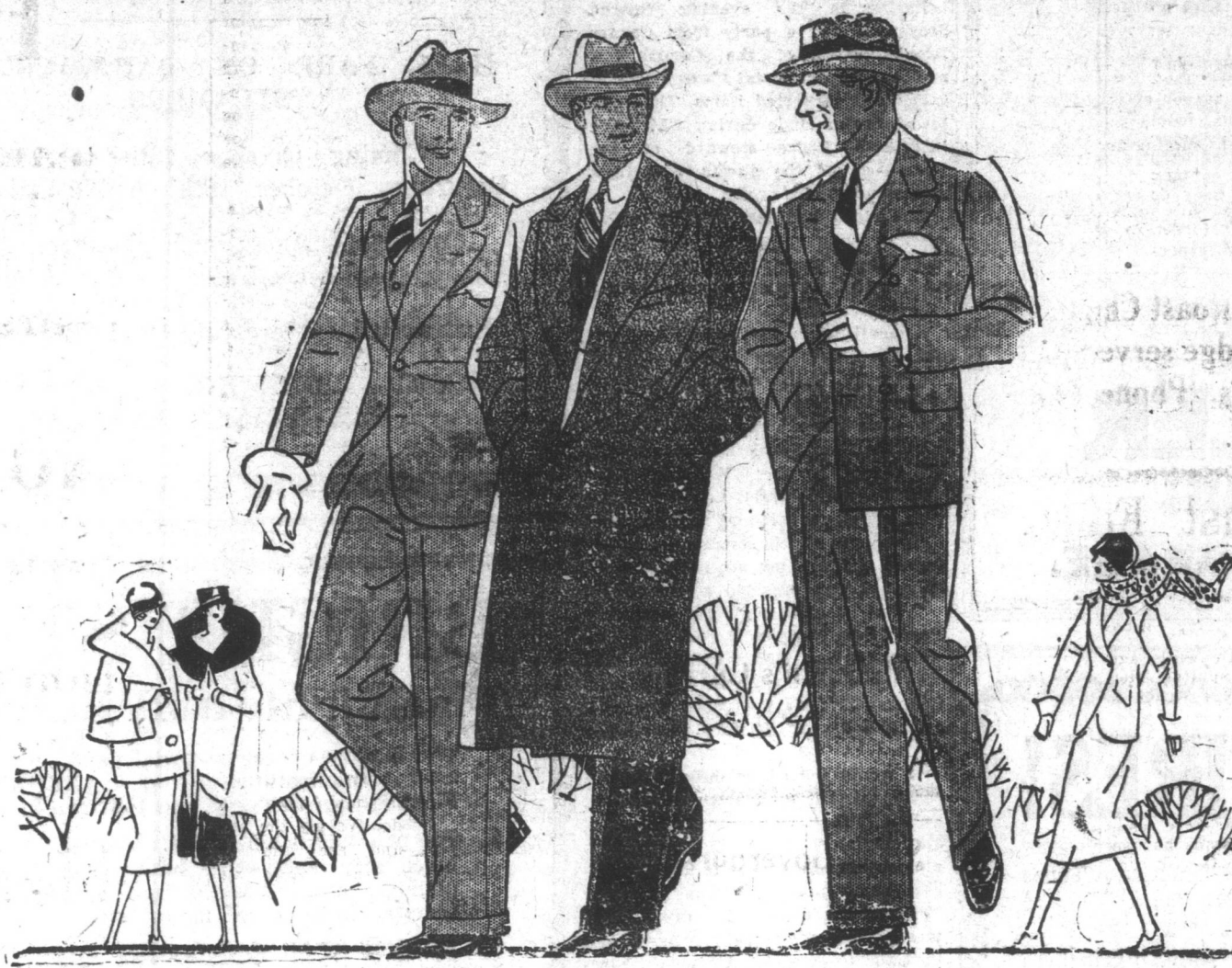
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There are coloured drawings of such present-day National Sporting Club celebrities as Lord Lonsdale, with buttonhole and cigar complete; that wonderfully youthful veteran, Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny; Mr. John Douglas, the referee and father of "J. W. H. T." the cricketer; and the National Sporting Club manager, Mr. "Peggy" Bettinson, who was lightweight amateur champion in 1882.

An inscription on a fine silver cup tells us that it was won by Tom Cribb, of Gloucestershire, who became Champion of the Ring in 1808.

On the top floor is an interesting reconstruction of "Old London," showing us the shops kept by Bartholomew and Pistol, also a chapel and refectory, now used as a bar.

Up here is a coloured drawing of James J. Corbett, looking far more sprightly than when Bob Fitzsimmons' mighty fist crashed into his "solar plexus" and stretched him impotent on the world's championship floor.

Right downstairs now, and underground to the theatre, which seats nine hundred, and leaves standing-room for another three hundred or so.

Of all the historic contests here the greatest was probably the battle between Frank Slavin and Peter Jackson, the black. The "whitest" negro ever known knocked out the Australian in the tenth round, but practically paid for the victory with his life, for there is little doubt that the terrific body punishment he endured led up to the "galloping consumption" of which he died. Slavin himself was never the same man after that tremendous affray.

For sensation it would be hard to beat Carpenter's defeat of Bombardier Wells and Joe Beckett lasting precisely seventy-four seconds.

On these occasions as much as fifteen guineas were paid for a seat. Such prices, however, are exceptional, the usual charge being from one to five guineas.

To prevent any misconception, it should be stated that tickets cannot be purchased by the general public. Visitors must be introduced and accompanied by a member, who pays for their tickets, which include a seat for himself.

Helping the Veteran.

No other club can present such a sight as the National Sporting Club on a "big night," for there are to be seen the world's greatest sportsmen from the Prince of Wales downwards.

It is the most critical assembly in the world, and no mercy is shown to the non-trier or the foul fighter.

But it is also extremely fair and generous. Within an hour or two of Jim Driscoll's defeat by the Frenchman, Charles Ledoux—the most pathetic sight the club has seen—the hat had gone round and been filled with a very substantial sum for the veteran's benefit.

No woman has even seen a professional contest at the National Sporting Club, but the club also stages amateur events, to which ladies are admitted.

Three years ago the club, realising that its leasehold had only thirteen years to run, quickly raised £35,000 to purchase the freehold of its historic house.

CONFEDERATION LIFE. —

The Cost of Ill-Health in Canada

LARGELY PREVENTABLE.
TORONTO, Ont., Oct. 2.—(By Canadian Press)—That 180,000 individuals are every day suffering from disabling illness in Canada, that 54,000 adult males are continuously ill, thereby causing the loss each year of 16,200,000 working days, with an additional probable loss through illness of women workers of 4,800,000 working days; that at least 45 p.c. of all such disablement with its attendant economic loss is preventable, and that the total cost of illness to the Dominion of Canada rises annually to \$270,000,000, a sum equal to seventy-five per cent. of the total expenditure of the Federal Government were some of the facts presented by the Toronto Social Hygiene Council at a public meeting here to-night.

It was stated at the meeting that largely owing to the fact that immigration policies are stressed more than public health measures by Canadian governments, there are 15,000 infants under one year of age who die every year in Canada. Total operative expenditure for Canadian hospitals, asylums and sanatoria reach annually a sum of \$50,000,000 exclusive of the costs of private institutions for medical care and the yearly budget for tuberculosis alone is \$7,000,000 in Canada.

With a strong health policy at Ottawa it was urged it should be possible to tremendously reduce these costs of illness which are very largely preventable.

Statistics released at this meeting will be put into the hands of every candidate running in the coming election, with a request that he announce his stand on public health questions.

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