

one might have thought uneasily. It lingered on his man, Firby, for an instant, wavered for a moment as it met the steady gaze of Sir John Dering, and then came to a stop as he fronted the chairman.

"I have an old-standing promise from Sir John Dering that he will match Jem Belcher, or another, with any man I can find for two hundred guineas a side."

Colonel Darleigh looked with a questioning eye towards Sir John Dering, who bit his lip as if momentarily embarrassed, but gravely inclined his head in assent.

"I desire to take advantage of that promise now," Colonel Darleigh went on, speaking slowly. "I am prepared to stand on Firby as my man, and he is willing."

Firby grinned appreciatively.

"The terms of the match are that it shall be for two hundred a side within one month from now. The man who does not put his nominee in the ring by twelve noon, forfeits the stake. If Sir John Dering does not put up Belcher, the name of the second man must be declared within seven days. I am open to back Firby, taking slight odds, to any amount Sir John may choose to name, on the terms governing the stake as to forfeit. I trust I make my offer clear," he added, with a calmness somewhat over-accentuated.

Colonel Darleigh dropped quietly into his chair.

Immediately a roar of talk burst like a pent-up torrent, and every man seemed desirous of speaking at once. To all in that room the challenge was extraordinary. Eyes turned to Firby. First-class

figh
lieve
para
fran
mer
fren
lool
Col
mal
win
fool
mal
I
Sir
ing
aga
He
was
cha
thin
cou
figi
the
a v
bec
a s
ha
bu
W
If
ab
no
fee