

The Prizefighter's Story

"I'm not complaining," said the pugilist. "I had my day. It was a little longer than the average of this business, and I did save some dollars that came my way, though that wasn't the rule.

"So now I sit in the back row and read most of the time. But when I read about the big fellows of the present shying at an offer of \$40,000 for a few punches back and forth, I do regret these gray hairs.

"Easy money? We would have thought so twenty years ago. It would have been to the ringside on the run for ours. But what used to be a big dose of coin is now a small one.

"We got little money that we earned by taking and giving punches that meant black eyes, broken noses and tin ears. At that time we were lucky if the lawyers didn't get the whole purse for keeping us out of jail for breaking the law as well as the other fellow's face.

"To be honest, though, once in a while—once in a great while—there was something doing on Easy street. But I never tell you about the time I went back to the old town where I was born? Well it was almost a shame to take that money, but I'll confess, and that's more than some of the present-day fighters could do and keep out of jail.

"To begin with the first chapter, I broke away from home when I was very small kid because there were lots of things I wanted to see. In going there I had to take and give plenty of hard knocks, and by the time I was 17 I knew how to take care of myself in a scrap and how to take other fellow away if I could catch him.

"Then I got into the game for money. I didn't get the big end of it at first. Few of us do in this business or any other. But if a knockdown for the count don't make a man's nerve, he'll come back and get the goods some day.

"Remember the punch that put you out, and the next time you see it coming, duck!

"That was my golden rule, and I put it to the head of the class. It's good place to be. After you get a reputation life is softer. Well, when they fit you, and you can wear mounds without being suspected.

"When I got pretty far to the west, I decided to go back and see the old folks. I had the price of a head calf in every pocket, and the money was life size.

"The papers gave me as much as they did the circus, and there was a handshaking bee on every corner when I went out for a walk. After a week of this I began to think a few places I liked better and I was ready to move along when I got an offer that looked too good to be passed up.

"It's a poor town nowadays that can't get a saloon with a pugilist's name over the door, but in those days the scheme was new. A brewer had the best place in town, and he had it turned over to me. But he kept a mortgage. And, of course, I sold only his beer. He was willing to let me make some money that could make some at the same time. That was all right.

"Well, the moth and the flame come worked. The handshaking went on over the bar, and the money came in. All I did was to stand and look pleasant, while the other fellow stacked up the coin. A good pugilist would have been satisfied, but I wasn't.

"A respectable cat likes to catch his own mice.

"My muscles were getting rusty. I fixed up a punching bag in the back room and gave a few exhibitions. Then I put in a small ring, and let some of the youngsters punch with other for the amusement of the crowd.

"Well, in a week that town was all mad—not fighting mad. That was later. It was the worst case of sporting fever I ever saw.

"Sporting fever is a good deal more than smallpox in some ways. Smallpox kills a man, but it breaks out many.

"The town was pretty tough in those days. There was the icehouse gang, the gas-house gang and the rollingmill gang, and several others that I have forgotten. The rivalry between them was about 300 in the street corners and the back of the ring in my saloon the boys were happy and the coroner didn't have so much to do. I refused all the goes, and when the papers got too free with the rules in a punch or two myself and frightened things out.

"A good referee has to know the rules, if he can illustrate them, so that the better.

"One night the rollingmill boys brought down a new one, and the way they flashed the limit of their pay envelopes tipped me off that they had been keeping the guy under cover for a killing. The gas-house crowd was feeling pretty strong on one of their own scrappers, and there was no trouble about getting them in the ring.

"The rollingmill man won in a walk, but he did it running. He went out of his corner at top speed, swinging both hands, and when one of them landed it was all over.

"Next night he whipped the ice-house champion the same way. After that I couldn't get anybody in town to meet him.

"Then I got my idea of picking up some easy money. One afternoon McCann came into the place.

"Would you like to put on the mitts with me?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said, as cocky as if he was the real thing.

"I took him into the back room and looked the door. When I got through he had a black eye, a split lip, his nose was bleeding and he was hanging to the ropes to keep off the floor.

"Now, do you think you're a fighter?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said, and he tried his best to stand up, but his legs were too wobbly.

"No, you're not," said I, "not yet. But I'll make a fighter of you."

"I meant what I said then. He left the rolling mill and I paid him a salary to learn to box, which wasn't so generous as you might think off-hand. I had my game like the brewer had the mortgage.

"The papers began to print pictures of McCann instead of me, but I didn't kick. They said I thought he would be a great fighter, and I didn't deny it. One of them hinted that he was making me hustle to hold my own in our practice bouts, which were all private. I didn't deny that either.

"If you don't tell all you know the other fellow will guess wrong sometimes.

"Then I wrote to New York and made a match for McCann. I picked out a third-rater, but one who had been long enough in the ring to make his name known. He was what we call a trial horse. A trial horse will win if he can, but if he can't, he is tough enough to take a good beating, and is willing to take it twice a week for the small end of the purse.

"When I announced the purse I also announced that the fight would be held in the largest hall in the town, that the seats would be \$2, \$3 and \$5, and that tickets were on sale at my place. The rush to get them promised success for me, and the town was sure that McCann couldn't lose.

"A man's friends can make a reputation for him before the fight, but he has to land the punch to keep it.

"The night of the fight came, and the hall was jammed. The money from the advance sale was in my safe and the money from the box office was in my pocket before I took McCann into the ring.

"When he crawled through the ropes he got a cheer that showed what the crowd thought of him. Varney, the New Yorker, was already in his corner. The referee, one of the best in the business, was on hand. He had been engaged as an evidence that everything was on the level.

"There are a few men in this business who are a guarantee of fair play and they're needed.

"Now, McCann, I said as I was putting on his gloves, 'keep cool. If you remember one-tenth of the things I've told you and forget nine-tenths of what you learned at the rolling mill you'll win. But keep cool, whatever you do.'

"Sure," said McCann.

"He did keep cool for one minute, while Varney was feeling him out. Then the New Yorker's left shot out straight and landed on McCann's nose.

"I knew what was coming, but I took a chance at safety play and shouted to him to keep cool. It was no use. The McCann blood was up, and it was the rollingmill style for him then.

"As Varney backed away McCann rushed, swinging his fists in the old way. The New Yorker stepped in cleverly and straightened him up with another jab on the nose, but he couldn't stop that rush if he had had on brass knuckles instead of four-ounce gloves.

"The second punch on the nose and the cheers of his friends had made a wild man of McCann. The two went bang against the ropes and through them into the laps of the people below, McCann on top. The house was up in the air, and my pull with the police was the only thing that

stopped a raid.

"The fall either stunned McCann or sobered him some, I don't know which, but he allowed himself to be pulled up. Neither man was hurt. We got them back into the ring and called it an accident, though McCann might have been disqualified without any protest from me.

"That ended the first round, and during the one-minute rest the referee came over to our corner.

"Say, he said to me, 'what kind of a wild Indian is this you're trying to push into the business. Do you want to make work for some undertaker friends of yours?'

"I was too busy swearing at McCann just then to answer, and the bell rang for the second. It didn't last as long as the first.

"Another tap on the nose, another rush, and this time McCann picked up the New Yorker in his arms and tossed him over the ropes. It was all to the good as an exhibition of strength, but it didn't go under the rules laid down by a certain Marquis, and the referee gave the fight to the New Yorker. The crowd was so thick around the ring that Varney had landed on their heads and wasn't hurt.

"Of course, there was a howl at the decision. The crowd had paid to see a fight, and they had seen about four minutes of rough-house. But it was easy money for me. Varney got \$300, the referee got \$100, the other expenses were about \$300, and I got \$2,300.

"McCann? Well, he got over his desire to be a ring fighter. I left town the next day, and I don't think the town was sorry.

"The public isn't always a good referee."—New York Sun.

MUTINY OF PRISONERS

Desperate Criminals Escape at Salem, Or.

After Shooting to Death Three Guards—Bloodhounds on Trail.

Special to the Daily Nugget.

Salem, Or., June 9.—A mutiny occurred at the state penitentiary today resulting in a wholesale attempt of the convicts to escape. Citizens flocked to the assistance of the authorities. Harry Tracy, twenty years, and David Merrill, twelve years for assault and robbery, escaped after killing three guards—Frank Ferrill, S. R. Jones and Ben Tiffany. The prisoners had just marched to the foundry at 7 a. m. when Tracy appeared suddenly with a rifle and shot a guard. On getting outside the fence he shot another guard at a distance of 150 yards, and then escaped to the woods. A posse of forty men is out. A battle is expected with the prisoners, who are armed with two rifles and two revolvers.

Salem, Or., June 10.—Bloodhounds are being used to trace the desperadoes who escaped from the state penitentiary yesterday.

Mining Experts

Special to the Daily Nugget.

Seattle, June 10.—To investigate for Capt. De Lamar tin properties at Cape York, bonded for \$200,000, Charles W. Watson and Ralph W. Watson, of Salt Lake, two mining experts particularly familiar with tin deposits, have sailed for the north. Capt. De Lamar is a capitalist who is buying several million dollars' worth of gold, copper and tin mines in all parts of Alaska, and is at the head of the company preparing to build a railroad from Valdez to Eagle.

Better Look Out

Special to the Daily Nugget.

Seattle, June 10.—An expedition of which M. W. Gorman of Portland, Ore., and W. H. Osgood of Washington, D.C., are members, is instructed to proceed to Alaska north of Cook inlet for the purpose of studying plants and animals in that locality. Mr. Gorman said, "Incidentally I shall make it a point to visit craters and volcanoes in that locality which are smoking. These are Mt. Pianna on the coast and a mountain on Augustine island, not far away."

Much Money

Special to the Daily Nugget.

London, June 10.—The revised British financial statement shows an estimated expenditure of \$881,795,000; revenue \$762,175,000. The deficit will be met out of proceeds of the consols loan of \$149,000,000, leaving \$29,000,000 available for contingencies and redemption of a part of the national debt.

Bold Bad Men


Special to the Daily Nugget.

Constantinople, June 10.—The brigands who abducted Miss Stone held a secret conference at Sofia and arranged the disposition of the ransom. They decided to send more bands to Macedonia on a secret mission.

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