

FOREWORD

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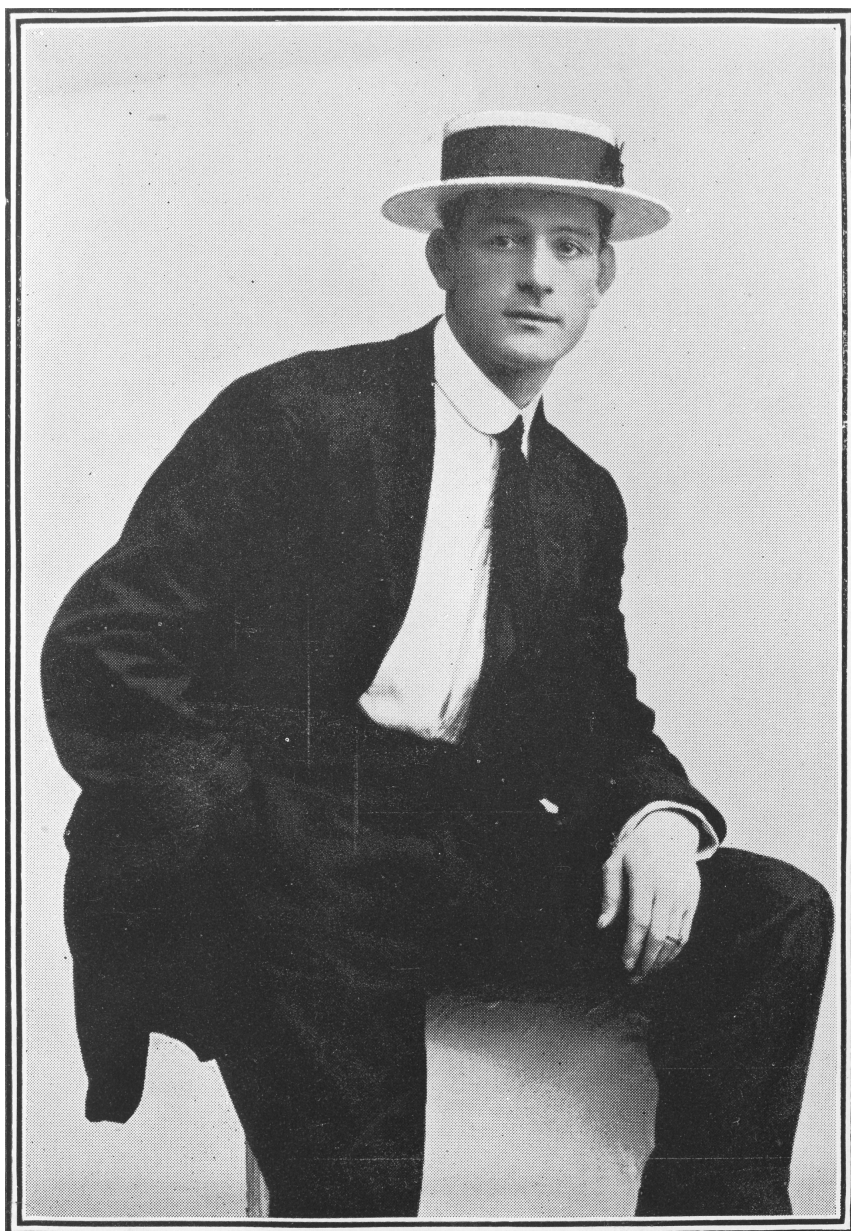
Special thanks to Professor Bruno Cruicchi, collector and life-long Martial Artist for providing the original of this book for me to republish.

DEDICATION

Special dedication to my energetic and enthusiastic son Christopher, my stunningly beautiful daughter Allison, and my lovely and understanding wife Mylinda.

-Kirk Lawson

THE
STRAIGHT LEFT
AND
HOW TO CULTIVATE IT



JIM DRISCOLL, RETIRED UNDEFEATED FEATHER-WEIGHT CHAMPION
OF THE WORLD.

THE
STRAIGHT LEFT

AND

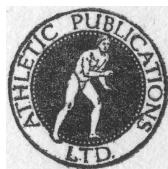
HOW TO CULTIVATE IT

BY

JIM DRISCOLL

(Retired Undefeated Feather-weight Champion of the World)

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED



LINK HOUSE
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LONDON

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PREFACE

I have been asked to produce this little treatise in the hope (at least, that is the way the proposition was made) that its appearance and existence generally might tend to preserve, or rather to revive, the old British school of boxing, which so many people seem to think is in a very bad state of health.

We have lost two of the three World Championships we held a few years since, and can to-day boast of but one, namely, the Fly-weight title, held by Jimmy Wilde. Even this may not remain long with us, since it is common knowledge that the great little Jimmy is contemplating retirement, and since, when he does retire, his title will assuredly be claimed by Johnny Buff, it would be idle to suppose that we can turn to any of our own boxers now before the public in the belief that any one of them could keep the Championship on these shores. Worse still, our representatives have failed to cover themselves with any superabundant glory in competition with Continental boxers. It is true that we are better off, for the time being, than we were. We do hold the Middle, Welter, Light, Bantam, and, of course, the Fly-weight European Championships (Ted [Kid] Lewis holds the first two), but we have no Heavy or Cruiser-weight whom we could venture to send against Georges Carpentier with any prospect of success, nor, even presuming that Joe Fox, or some other feather-weight we could turn out, might wrest the European crown in his division from the present holder, the Belgian, Arthur Wyns, could we hope that he would be

able to hold it against that brilliant Frenchman, Eugene Criqui.

When writing my preface to the first edition of this book, I expressed the hope that with the practically universal instruction in boxing enjoyed by the millions of men who joined up for the war, we should at least be able to produce some boxers who would restore our old prestige, but this hope has been doomed to disappointment.

It has been a bitter disappointment too. The opportunities were there, but the boxers who have "come up"—if one can apply the term to them—during the past few years have shown an utter disregard for the one essential to true success in the ring, the old British style, which, despite a notion far too prevalent, is superior and will ever be superior to all others.

Its supremacy was derided at one time, say ten or twelve years ago, when most of the world's titles were held by men who prided themselves on being real American "huskies." These men were great "in-fighters." They sought close quarters invariably and relied for their success on their ability to assimilate punishment and to deal it out. They scorned the use of the straight left, or else professed to do so. Some of them actually did, relying on swings, hooks and particularly on rough tactics, to batter their way to victory. They were successful over the "straight lefters" who went up against them, however, not because their style was superior, but because they were stronger and tougher men physically, and because the British stylists whom they met and defeated were only half-educated pugilistically. These might have been able to hit straight, but were ignorant or indifferent to the necessity of putting real force into their punches as well as accuracy of aim.

Supremacy, world supremacy, has departed from the swinging husky brigade to-day. All the real champions and first fighters to-day, American and French, are "straight-lefters," disciples of the old British school. Jack Dempsey, Tom and Mike Gibbons, Harry Wells, Georges Carpentier, Benny Leonard, Mike O'Dowd, Pete Herman, Eugene Criqui, Johnny Kilbane, Johnny Buff, Ted (Kid) Lewis, Jimmy Wilde, etc., are all men who hit straight, use the left hand as it should be used, are fully aware of the fact that the feet are as important as the hands in the boxing game, and are first, last and all the time, *boxers* first and *fighters* afterwards. They *can* fight and do. They would not be champions if they didn't. But when punching they send all their weight along behind their deliveries. If they happened to be Englishmen or Welshmen, or had not built up most of their reputation in the United States, the good old English style would not have suffered in repute; but because they are Americans—with the exception of Wilde, who is regarded fondly, but erroneously, as a freak, and Lewis, who is supposed to have learned his boxing in the States, our own misguided youths persist in contemning the advice of the old-time instructors, the "back numbers" as they consider them to be, who could really teach them something.

As a result, the youths who ought to be making good in this country are content to fall into clinches, to hold and to wrestle, to slap and to dab freely to the discredit of the game itself and to the wreck of their own opportunities for self-advancement.

It is with the earnest hope of changing all this that I have evolved this treatise. For I am a convinced believer in the straight left. I know that it is the winning card to play, and I want all British boxers to play it.

My remarks will not teach you; they may not even help you to become expert boxers, but they will at least, or rather, I hope that they will at least, underline some of the faults you may be thereby able to avoid, and they may further faintly indicate now and then a few useful moves, punches and defensive measures, which may prove profitable.

If a perusal of these pages will only do half of these things, then the labour of writing them will not have been in vain.

THE STRAIGHT LEFT

CHAPTER I

Why the Straight Left has lost much of its old Reputation.

The good old straight left, which one believed to be an almost sacred institution, has fallen upon evil days and in certain circles almost into disrepute. That the last-mentioned fate should have befallen it can be somewhat easily understood, when one remembers that the vast majority of straight lefters in these degenerate days are but the feeblest of pushers, and are consequently doomed to defeat every time they have the misfortune to run up against a real fighter.

The First Essential to Successful Boxing. The Conversion of an Australian Expert.

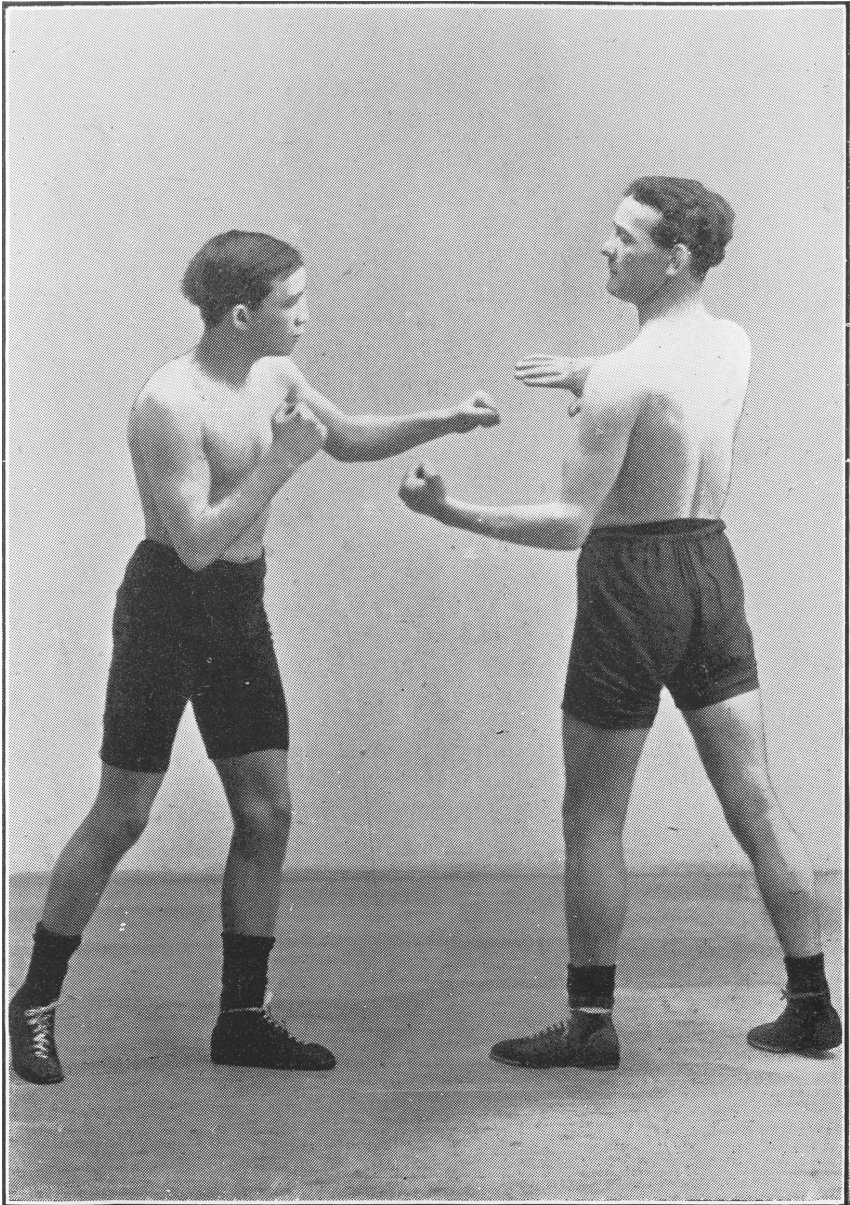
A long succession of these calamities has convinced the majority of American boxing "fans" that the old British faith in the efficiency and soundness of the straight-left style is an exploded fallacy which can never hope to succeed against a determined double-handed attack. Even such a sound and experienced critic as the late Mr. W. W. Naughton declared that the old English school had been proved to be obsolete and that its methods and teaching belonged properly to the museum, and in support of his argument he quoted numerous recent contests in which recognised exponents of the straight left school had gone down to defeat before

swinging, hit from the hip fighters. This was the Mr. Naughton who had known the Larry Foley Australian type of boxer, when that type was at its best, the man who had seen Peter Jackson and Jim Hall in their prime. The man who had known Australian Billy Murphy and Griffio, and who yet was of the opinion that rushing, tearing, head down, smother-up, shoulder and elbow scrappers of the Billy Papke-Battling Nelson type, because they had been successful of late years, must necessarily be superior to all their predecessors.

On the lines of his argument, his conclusions appeared to be the only possible ones. The faulty boxers of the past few years have lost fight after fight where they have been pitted against the Battling Nelsons, the Wolgasts, the Papkes, the Gunboat Smiths, the Frank Klaus, the George Chips and all the other members of the Bear-Cat and Tiger tribe who confidently rely for their success on their brute force and—varying degrees of ignorance.

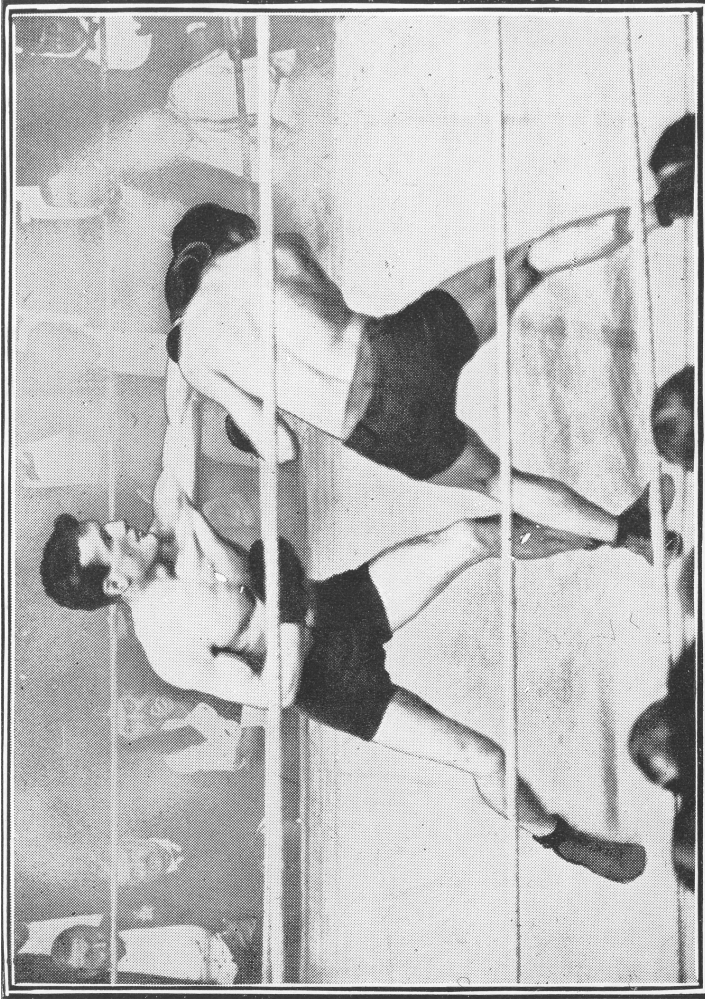
Circumstantial Evidence; and its Faults.

But the success of the "Bear Cats" has been due rather to the feebleness of the opposition than to any outstanding merit of the ursine-feline family. The head down, doubly-smothered, wide-straddling hit from the hip boxer would have found himself in a helpless, hopeless bunch round about the tail end of the pugilistic race, if the Fates had decreed that he should have been born in the ages made famous by such men as Jim Corbett, George Dixon, Jem Mace, Peter Jackson, Jack MacAuliffe, and others. Mr. Naughton and the other so-called experts who have lavished praises on the more recent American schools, and who, in order to buttress their adulations, have gone out of their way to sling mud at the school which really made the game of boxing a popular sport, should have



POSITION

Driscoll, on the right, is standing back just far enough to be able to pull back away from a left lead, and yet near enough to be able to step in and lead a left to face or body, if his opponent hesitates.



PACKEY MCFARLAND SENDING HOME A LEFT TO THE SIDE OF FRED WELSH'S HEAD AND HALF-TURNING THE LATTER ROUND PREPARATOR TO THE

DELIVERY OF A RIGHT TO THE RIBS OR KIDNEYS

(N.B.—This was prior to the prohibition of the kidney punch).

known better. The men they have elevated to undeserved pedestals may have been singularly energetic and vigorous. They may have cultivated a physical fibre which is tougher than any brand previously known, and they may have developed punching powers which were unsuspected before their time. But they have failed to display either real accuracy in their offensive, or intelligent anticipation in their strategy and tactics.

The Brute Force Gamble.

One has to confess that they follow a certain plan of campaign and that their pet punches are usually designed as tactical operations, which will secure openings for further and even more highly prized thumps which they trust will "hack a way through"—and which have far too often succeeded in so doing. But when one has admitted this much, one has given them all the credit to which they are entitled. The heavy thumper, the man who picks his punch up from whatever position his hand may happen to find itself in, and who brings it over with the pious aspiration that it may prove to be a success, is taking a big gamble. The "Bear-Cat" brigade are fond of boasting that they pick their punches up from the floor. This is just boast (for, as I trust to be able to show later on, all punches should be picked up from the floor), but they omit to mention that their arsenals are almost entirely occupied with the manufacture of giant howitzers and that their attacks are consequently only of real use when they are directed against a more or less stationary and exposed fortification.

The Club or Rapier Comparison.

Which reminds me that I ought to apologise for the use of military metaphor, but in these days of war one cannot well help doing so. To put my argument in other words, the "Bear-Cat" brigade

are bludgeon fighters, who disdain the use of the rapier, for the simple reason that they are utterly ignorant of the finer points of the game. Yet the whole history of single combat refutes their argument. Man did not abandon the club as a weapon because he preferred the rapier as a parlour pastime, but because the sword proved itself to be the more useful weapon. And it was by a similar process of discovery that the axe, which had superseded the club, gave way to the sword and buckler, then to the use of swords, until even the broadsword and sabre were abandoned in favour of the rapier.

**The Evolution of the Sword-play and its Close
Connection with the Development of Boxing.
A Profitable Study.**

This evolution of the sword is well worthy of study, since it forms an exact parallel to the history of the list as the weapon of single combat. For though the ingenious novelists have perhaps frequently strained the truth when they have related how their academically trained heroes have prostrated some half a dozen uncouth bullies with the greatest ease, owing to their knowledge of the fistic art, there has nevertheless been a foundation of both truth and plausibility for these adventures.

Fistic science, if backed by strength and intelligence, ought always to beat brute force, and will even triumph in a rough and tumble, although when the rough and tumble arrives the scientific hero will find that it is necessary to employ rough and tumble methods as well as the more refined practice of the ring and the gym. Science wins because the rapier can be made to get home more frequently and more accurately than the club. But it must get home to good purpose. Must draw blood, and consequently must be both intelligently and forcefully directed.

CHAPTER II

The Cult of the "Coffee Cooler."

Now, it is neither easy nor safe to fix a date for any particular happening, but all the evidence points to the arrival of the "Coffee Cooler" (Frank Craig) as the incident which raised the curtain on the Decline and Fall of British Boxing. The Coffee Cooler, a coloured gentleman, endowed by nature with abnormally long arms, and an unusual agility of foot, used to pick up a flail-like punch from the region of his heels, which carried him triumphantly through a series of quick knock-out victories, culminating in the demolition of Ted Pritchard. It was this final crown of glory which captured the imagination of the budding British boxer. Ted Pritchard had been knocked out in a round by the gum-chewing "Cooler," and though Frank Slavin avenged the insult to our boxing reputation by reversing the compliment with one punch, the "Cooler's" methods had established a new fashion. The aspiring British boxer carefully noted that the "Coffee Cooler" made a practice of chewing gum when he entered a ring, and, further, that he continued to chew gum throughout every contest in which he engaged, and by some curious process of reasoning the aspiring one came to the conclusion that gum chewing was an essential ingredient in the manufacture of a champion boxer.

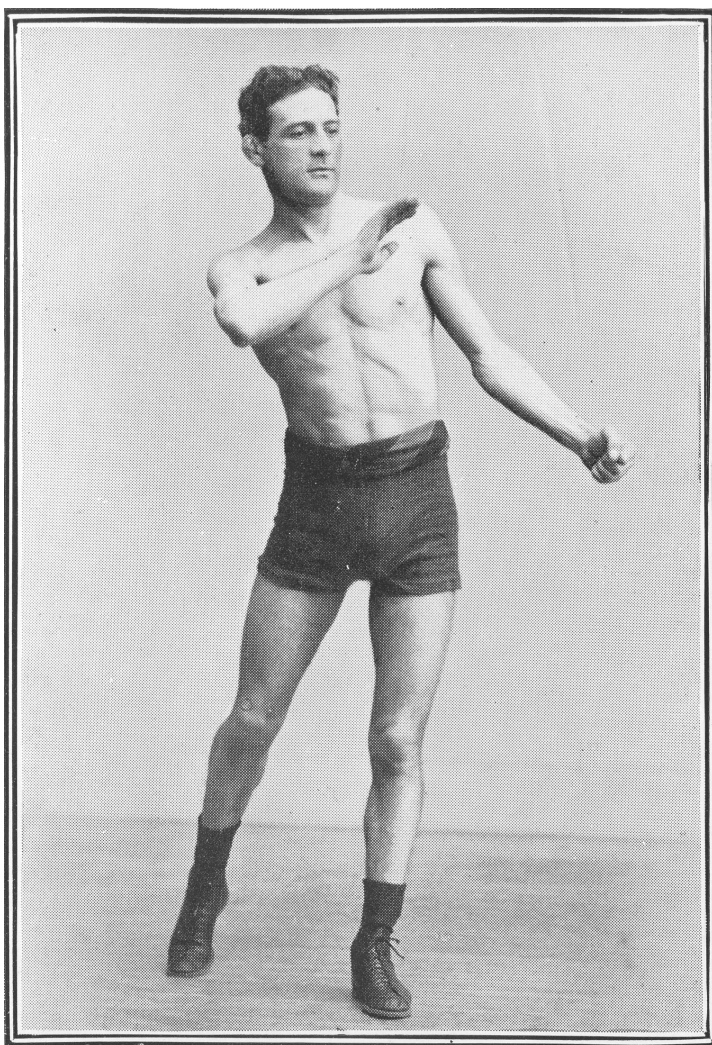
The Consequent Effect of the "Coffee Cooler" on Aspiring British Boxers.

These copied the "Cooler's " methods in other directions, that is, as far as they were able. But they were physically unable to develop either his long

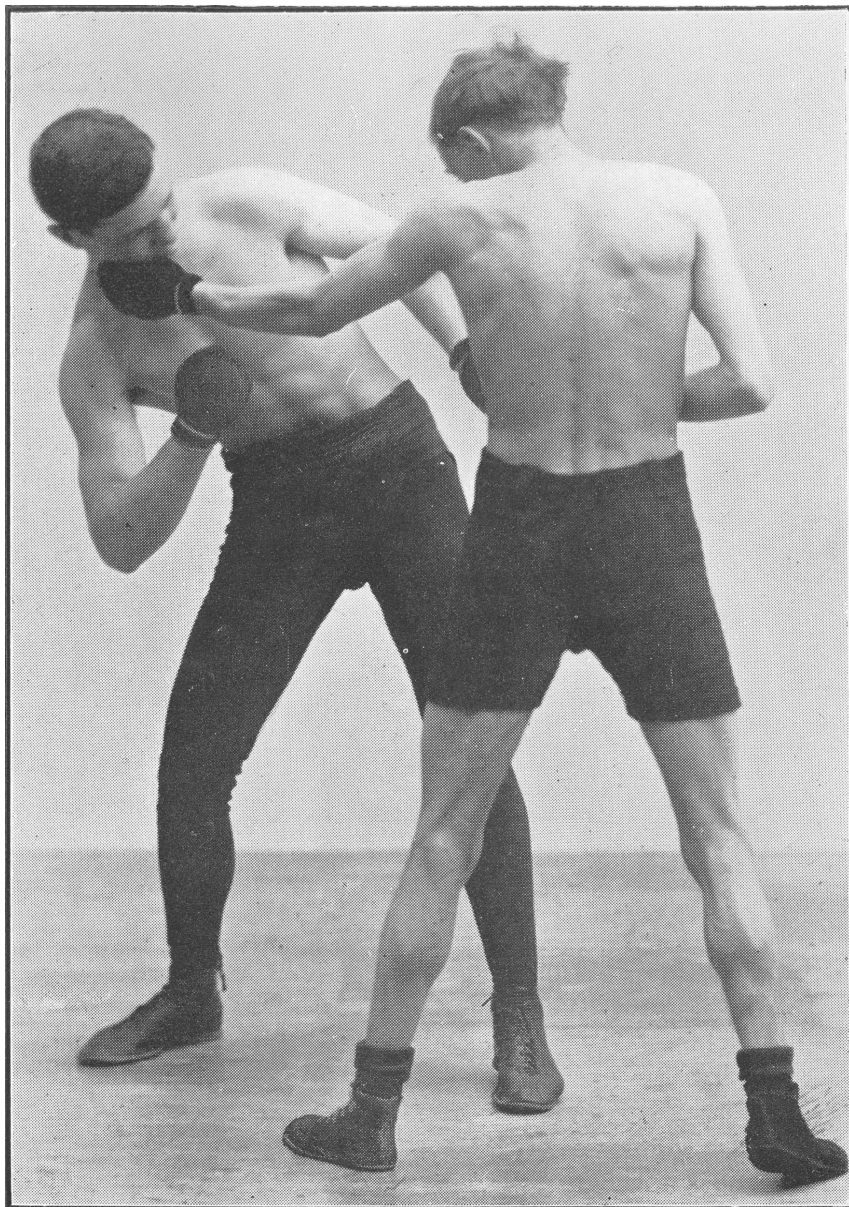
arms or the whipcord muscles which would seem to be a peculiarity of the coloured races. They forgot, to notice or to realise that the coloured men are generally flat-footed, and they also forgot that coloured men are by no means so sensible to pain as are their white brethren of the ring. Craig used to leave himself to all appearances as wide open as any street, but his imitators omitted to notice that he had a peculiar knack of swaying or swerving his body out of danger whenever this threatened. What they did notice was that the "Coffee Cooler's" most telling punches were delivered with a full arm swing, before which man after man went down. Those swinging blows appeared to be ever so much more forcible than any straight or hooked ones could possibly be, and for these reasons the rising generation of would-be champions started right in to cultivate the swinging style of delivery. They found it easier to lash out wildly in this fashion than to cultivate a really powerful straight punch, and as the opponents they ran up against were, as a rule, would-be exponents of the same wide-open pose and heavy swinging style (though, of course, without either the splendid judgment in timing and distance of the man they were trying to imitate), the ultimate issue of any meetings was usually decided either by chance or by brute force—with skill not even coloured on the card.

Other Slavish Imitations.

One could multiply instances such as this, indefinitely, if one cared to do so, but only one calls for any particular attention, as it will, I believe, serve to rub home more distinctly than any other, my contention that the decline in boxing, both in England and America, may be traced to a slavish and unconsidered imitation of the outstanding peculiarities of style which have distinguished certain success-



POSITION FOR THE LEFT HOOK EITHER FOR DELIVERY OR AS A FEINT. Note the defensive position of the right hand and that the left is ready to be hooked either to the head or body.



THE TIME THRUST.

Jimmy Wilde (with his back turned to the spectator) has checked an intended double handed attack by stepping in and shooting his left to the mouth.

ful boxers. For, mark you, the imitation only extends to the peculiarities, the departures from the orthodox. In many cases they may actually be faults in style and method. But the imitators never stop to consider whether they are virtues or defects. The only point they do notice is that in certain respects a particular boxer has either a mannerism peculiar to himself or a certain punch of which he is rather fond, and provided he wins his contests, his admirers at once seem to imagine that his success is due to that very peculiarity and to that alone.

The Imitators of Freddie Welsh.

Take the case of Freddie Welsh, for instance. No particular notice was taken of him by the general run of boxers when he paid his first visit home. He had won recognition in America and was considered in the States to be quite in the first flight of light-weights. Yet his first return home created very little sensation. The English papers only began to take special notice of him after he had beaten Abe Attell, drawn with Packey McFarland and was looked upon as a legitimate challenger for the world's championship.

Then, when he came home to beat Young Joseph, Henri Piet, Joe Fletcher and Johnny Summers, everybody started in to talk about him. The talk, too, centred round his particular predilection for the kidney punch. It was not a new punch. Everyone had seen it in action before, but Welsh, perhaps, employed it more freely than any predecessor.

The Kidney Punch Craze.

By some peculiar process of reasoning the budding boxer and even several who had had a fair amount of experience, arrived at the conclusion that Welsh's

success was entirely or, rather, mainly due to the use of this punch. And so we had an army of kidney punchers. No other punch was so cultivated, and boxing contests, for a season, degenerated into a series of scrambles in which both opponents sought to get into clinches, where they could hold each other, while exchanging thumps on the back, somewhere around the base of the spine. None of these boxers seemed to remember that kidney punches, or indeed any punches delivered on the back, could not possibly count on the score sheet and that the only advantage, if any, to be gained by them, was a possible weakening plus a probable irritation of one's adversary. The whole art of boxing was forgotten, or rather, flung to the winds. And since no one, or scarcely anyone, attempted seriously to attack in any legitimate scoring fashion, the science of self-defence seemed to have passed away for ever.

This, I believe, to be the whole secret of the recent decadence in boxing. Our boxers have forgotten that it is primarily and almost entirely "the noble art of self-defence," though it has always borne that name, and though its practice and study is still recommended on this sole plea. There are, however, not wanting signs that our memories have been jogged in this respect, and that the new generation of boxers, together with a few of the younger members of the old-established order, are remembering that the art and science of boxing is, after all, the art of self-defence first, last, and all the time, and that success is only to be won by remembering that defence is not only the chief thing to be considered, but that attack can only be allowed to come into the picture at all when it is employed as an auxiliary to defence, and in the old sense that the strongest form of defence is a vigorous attack, carried out mainly and almost entirely with a view to the minimising of the risk, or the repulse of all counter attack.

The Bed-Rock of both Attack and Defence.

And this is where the straight left comes in. Not, as is usually supposed, mainly as a mode of attack, but rather as a more effective and valuable means of keeping an opponent at a respectful distance. I have remarked elsewhere that the science of modern boxing, as instituted by Figg and Broughton was, and has always remained, a material development of the art of fencing. It is practically sword fencing without a sword, and follows in all its movements, or, rather, should follow, the same principles.

CHAPTER III

The Fencing and Boxing Maxim.

Now, as most people are aware, the very first principle of fencing is that the student must learn to "keep the line." For as long as he can contrive to preserve a straight wall of steel in a direct line from his shoulder down to his arm, so long will his body be impregnable to attack. The whole aim of attack in sword play is to get past this line, for until it is passed no point can be made. In earlier sword play, where a buckler, second sword, dagger or cloak was held in or wrapped round the left hand, there used to be a second line of defence, but it was always intended that the sword should be the principal barrier of protection, and it is, I believe, generally admitted that the science of the sword never approached perfection until the sword became the sole weapon of both attack and defence.

The Right Hand as a Substitute for the Dagger.

Boxing does differ in this respect, inasmuch as the elimination of the right hand for either attack or defence is practically unthinkable. But for all that, the right hand should be invariably regarded as quite a secondary affair. It is a reinforcing weapon pure and simple, one that should be used in much the same style as the dagger is, or, rather, as it used to be in the old days of sword and dagger, combat, save and except that the right hand is, and must neces-

sarily be, more frequently employed to give the *coup de grace* than the dagger ever used, to be. There have been and always will be boxers (?) who will win contests almost "solely by the use of their right" hands, but these victories can only be won over opponents whose left hand play is of such a distinctly inferior order, or the force of which has been sapped by a series of fierce aggressions which have worn down their owners' stamina. Lucky, or so-called lucky, right hand punches need not be considered, for unless these get home on a man who has had the misfortune to slip—say on a portion of the ring where water has been accidentally splashed—there are really no such things as lucky punches. It is true that a boxer may quite frequently send home a winning wallop, the result of which will surprise him as well as it surprises the recipient, but any and every success of this description can only occur through some defect or failure of the loser's defence. The so-called lucky punch, however wild or unorthodox it may be, should, and can always be, guarded against. Even the right cross, which has been justly and generally held to be the most effective punch in the whole catalogue, can only be effectively brought into operation after preliminary skilful play with the left. The left hand must prepare a way for it, either by a series of feints or stabs—though foot work, swerving, clinching and slipping (all branches of foot work by the way) will exert their influences. All others are, however, subsidiary to the work of the left hand. For the right hand winning punches ("the auctioneers," as Tom Sayers used to call them) can never be sent home until the receiver has been drawn inside the sphere of their operation, or, in other words, until the line of his defensive, established and maintained by his left arm, has been carried.

The Left Hand and the Sword.

In this respect more than in any other, the comparison between the case of the left hand and that of the sword in sword play holds good. The fencer is taught to keep the line, and has to learn that nothing else matters so much as this. In fact, that nothing else really matters at all. For if the line be always preserved, he cannot be touched. And as with the fencer, so with the boxer. So long as the latter maintains his line, i.e., keeps that straight left of his shooting in and out, and his opponent at the business end of it, the other fellow will be powerless or practically powerless to do him any harm. One must either circumvent a straight left, or else force one's way through its defence, and the first of these feats can only be accomplished by compelling it to deviate from the straight line, or, in other words, to cease to be a straight left, while if one wants to break through, one can only do so by running a most serious risk of being knocked out oneself, or in any case, undergoing a very severe and almost certain punishment for one's recklessness—always providing, of course, that the straight-lefter lands a real punch with this weapon. For *that* is as important an essential to left-hand play as its accuracy. For no matter how straightly it may be used, nor how frequently it may shoot out, the left hand punch is of precious little use as an offensive weapon, and even absolutely useless as a defensive one unless it is capable of checking an attack and even of *stopping* most attacks. I would give the same advice to boxers as that which Lord Fisher laid down as a rule to be obeyed in all naval combats, viz., to hit first, hit hard, and hit often, with the addendum I that they should always, or practically always, "hit straight."

“Bear-Cats.”

The charging, swinging boxer, who relies on his indifference to punishment, the fury of his onslaught and the tremendous power of his punch, can never hope to get home successfully on any opponent who employs a swift, straight and hard stabbing left to keep him out. Frank Klaus, “the Pittsburg Bear-Cat,” might be able to boast that he was able to force his way in close to Carpentier and to batter him down when he did manage to get close, but then it has never been quite certain that Klaus would have actually succeeded in scoring a knock-out if Descamps had not lost for his idol by entering the ring—and it has to be remembered that Carpentier had had the best of matters during the majority of the rounds. Further, even if Descamps transgressed the rules deliberately, and as the sole method of saving his pet from certain defeat, it has also to be remembered that Carpentier had not then come to his full growth and was thus less well fitted to endure the famous Pittsburger’s battering than he would have been able to do to-day. For Carpentier was a light middle weight in those days, be it remembered.

The Price Battling Nelson has had to Pay.

And Nemesis overtook Klaus, as it overtakes all these “Bear-Cats,” even “Durable Danes” among the rest. Klaus and Nelson took so many batterings, rammed their heads forward and offered their jaws for so much punishment that their nervous energy became practically shattered in the end, and when the knock-outs began to arrive, they came in a flood. It is the common lot, and has been evidenced, not by Klaus and Nelson alone, but by poor Harry Lewis, by Hughie Mehegan, by Jim Jeffries himself, if you will, though it was rather age and total loss of condition that beat Jeffries than anything else. And speaking of Jeffries reminds one that here was

possibly the one isolated case of a really great champion who was never particularly distinguished for outstanding skill as a straight left-hand boxer—in spite of the fact that Jeff's left was his most punishing weapon. As a boxer Jeffries was never in the same street with such men as Corbett, Fitzsimmons or Peter Jackson, and yet he triumphed over them all. How and why?

Straight Hitting, Fanciful and Forceful.

Well, in the first place, Corbett had long passed his best days when he met that "mountain of a man" (as Bob Fitzsimmons has called his conqueror), and Fitzsimmons was too old. Yet Corbett came within an ace of winning back his old title, simply by sheer force of his splendid foot-work, coupled with fine, straight, left-handed play. Pompadour Jim was well ahead on points by the end of the twenty-first round, and had indeed succeeded in staving off defeat so well that when his knock-out arrived in the twenty-third, it was a matter of general surprise. It had been seen that his strength was failing, but it was generally believed and hoped that he would be able to stay the distance. There were only two more rounds to go and he was a certain winner if he could only manage to last through them. Indeed, it was the luckiest of things for Jeffries that the contest had been fixed for twenty-five rounds and not for twenty. For Corbett must have won otherwise, and would undoubtedly have won as it was, but for the difference between his age and Jeff's. Those nine extra years beat Corbett.

The Youth which will always be Served.

And it was age, too, and age only which beat Fitzsimmons in both his fights with the big fellow. Thirty-six years had to go down before twenty-four, as they nearly always will, and in fact always must when everything else is at all on the same plane.

Yet, in spite of the extra twelve years' burden which Fitzsimmons carried (and in comparative weight it was nearer twenty, because every year over thirty may be said to count as two at least—as I have reason to know) and the three stone odd which he was giving away in weight, he was still able to carve Jeffries up for eight or nine rounds. The carving, by the way, was worse when the two met again some three years later (though Fitzsimmons was then verging close on forty); though the fight did not last so long. Yet for all that, Jeffries' seconds begged their man to give in, to allow them to throw up the towel, as early as the seventh round. They warned him that if he went on he would inevitably lose the sight of his eye, if he persisted, and it was only because Jeff begged to be allowed to try his luck for one more round that they held the towel back. It was nip and tuck, but Jeffries was the better judge of the situation. He knew that he was the younger and that he could bank and bank safely on his youth. Poor old Bob began to go to pieces in the eighth round and collapsed in the ninth; but so far as boxing ability was concerned, Jeffries simply wasn't on the scene at all.

Jeffries' Profit and Loss Account.

And yet Jeffries was by no means a bad boxer. His reputation gained and suffered by the period in which he flourished. He came at the end of perhaps the greatest heavy-weight era the world is ever likely to see. An era which began with John L. Sullivan, and which saw such men as Charlie Mitchell, Jem Smith, Jake Kilrain, Frank Slavin, Peter Jackson, Jem Corbett, Gus Ruhlin, Bob Fitzsimmons, Tom Sharkey, Bob Armstrong, Joe Goddard, Joe Choynski, and hosts of others, who might all have been world champions if they had not had the misfortune to clash. It has to be remembered that all these men's form could be closely

compared. If they did not all meet each other, at least they had intermingled, and when the cards were sorted it appeared that Jeffries was king of them all.

I may appear to be in opposition to the popular idea, but I do not think that Jeffries was the best—in spite of the fact that he beat Peter Jackson, who had beaten Goddard, Smith and Slavin—in spite of the fact that he beat Corbett, who had beaten Sullivan, Kilrain and Mitchell—in spite of the fact that he beat Fitzsimmons, who had beaten Corbett, Ruhlin, Sharkey, Dempsey, and Hall—in spite of his own wins over Armstrong, Ruhlin, Sharkey, Munro and the rest. For Peter Jackson was but the wreck of his former self, Fitzsimmons and Corbett were just battered down by the superior weight, strength, and, above all, by the *youth* of Jeffries. Sharkey has always maintained that he actually beat the big fellow and has been strongly supported in that connection. Again, Corbett was so plainly Jeff's master for twenty rounds of their first contest as to make the then world's champion appear a veritable novice at times, while Fitz was only beaten on both occasions because his aged and war-worn body was unable to withstand the battery to which it was subjected.

The Value of Speedy Footwork.

Jeffries was singularly quick on his feet for such a mountainous man, and would probably have given even Corbett, Fitzsimmons, Sullivan, Jackson, or Slavin a tremendously hard battle at any period of their careers, at any rate, *after* he had been taught how to box. But he was never at any time a really finished boxer, for the simple reason that he was never able to cultivate really scientific left-hand play.

It is true that he relied more on his left than on his right, but then those left-hand punches of his which drove his opponents to defeat were usually or most frequently smashed home to the body, and at close

quarters. Jeffries would force his way into clinches whenever he could do so, and would then with a powerful push of his right shoulder prise a space through which he could drive in a short left-hand jab to his opponent's body. It was by the succession of these that he sapped Fitzsimmons' strength. "Ruby Robert" might administer the most terrible punishment to Jeff's face, so terrible that the big fellow's seconds implored him to give in and to allow them to throw up the sponge, but Jeffries refused because he knew that he was mashing Fitzsimmons' body to a jelly. He could see that he was doing this when he noticed that the freckled warrior was refusing to sit down between the rounds and was compelled to receive the attention of his seconds standing up in his corner. Poor Bob was afraid that if he sat down, his bruised and battered stomach muscles would fail to raise him again.

Facial and Bodily Punishment.

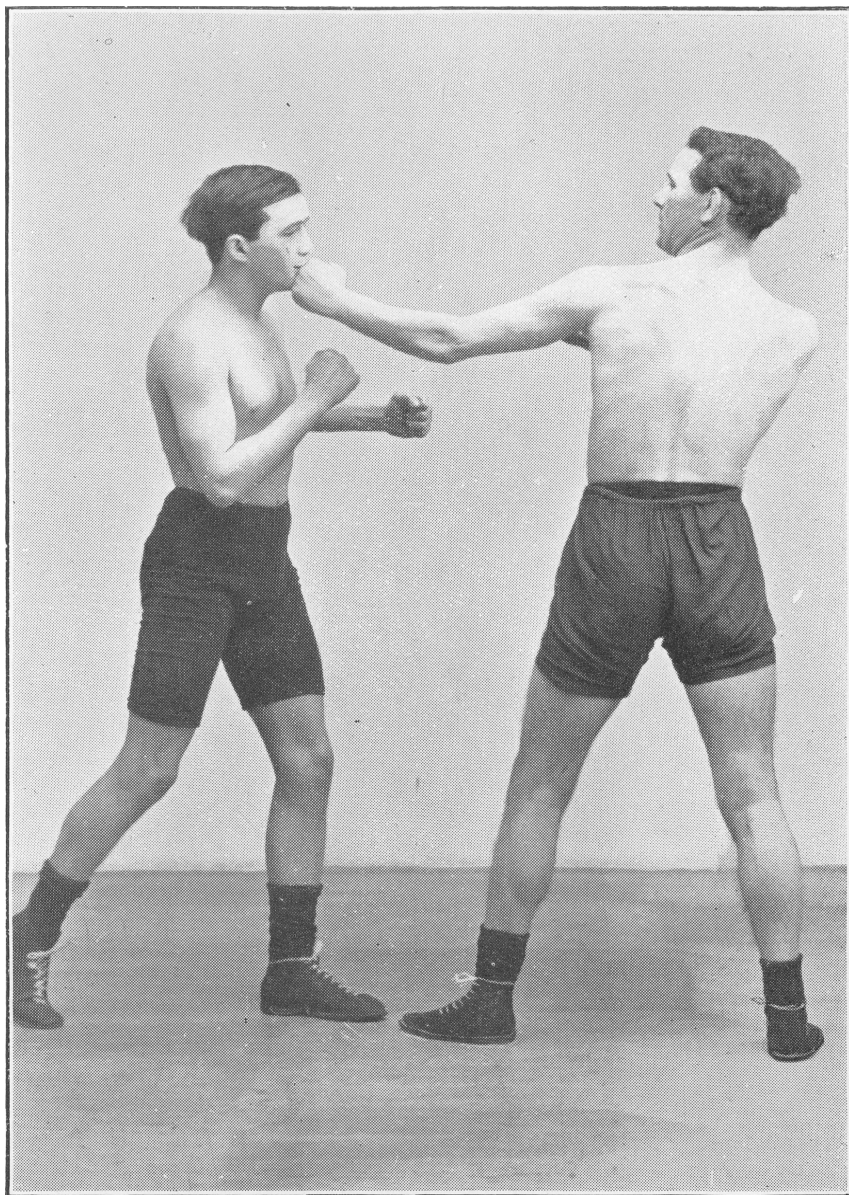
There is a tale that on the day after their second battle when the two men met, Fitzsimmons burst out laughing at the sight of his conqueror's face, which was swathed in bandages, while the conquered was scarcely marked. Jeff growled his annoyance at Fitzsimmons' amusement, whereupon Bob soothed him with the assurance that he could well afford to let him (Bob) laugh, "because," he added, "if you could only see the state of my ribs and stomach you would have the laugh on me, and yours would be a louder laugh. Anyway, it would hurt me too much to laugh as I should like to do."

You see, that in spite of his great size and great reach, Jeffries simply could not keep his men at the right distance. He *had* to take heavy punishment if he wanted to give it. There is still an idea, as there has always been, that this is the most heroic form of fisticuffs. Probably the idea is more popular to-day than it ever was before, thanks to the suc-

cesses gained by such men as Stanley Ketchel, Papke, Battling Nelson, Frank Klaus and others. The "cast iron men," as they were pleased and proud to be called. But all these cast iron men had more or less short careers—while it may be added that they won their championships owing to their luck in flourishing at a time when really scientific boxing was conspicuous mainly by its absence in their respective divisions. Battling Nelson, it is true, managed to hand over knock-out blows to Joe Gans, "the Old Master," on two separate occasions. But then, Gans, who could stand comparison with any boxer in the history of the game, was a worn out man, or at all events, very nearly worn out, with the seeds of consumption already sown in him when he met the "Durable Dane."

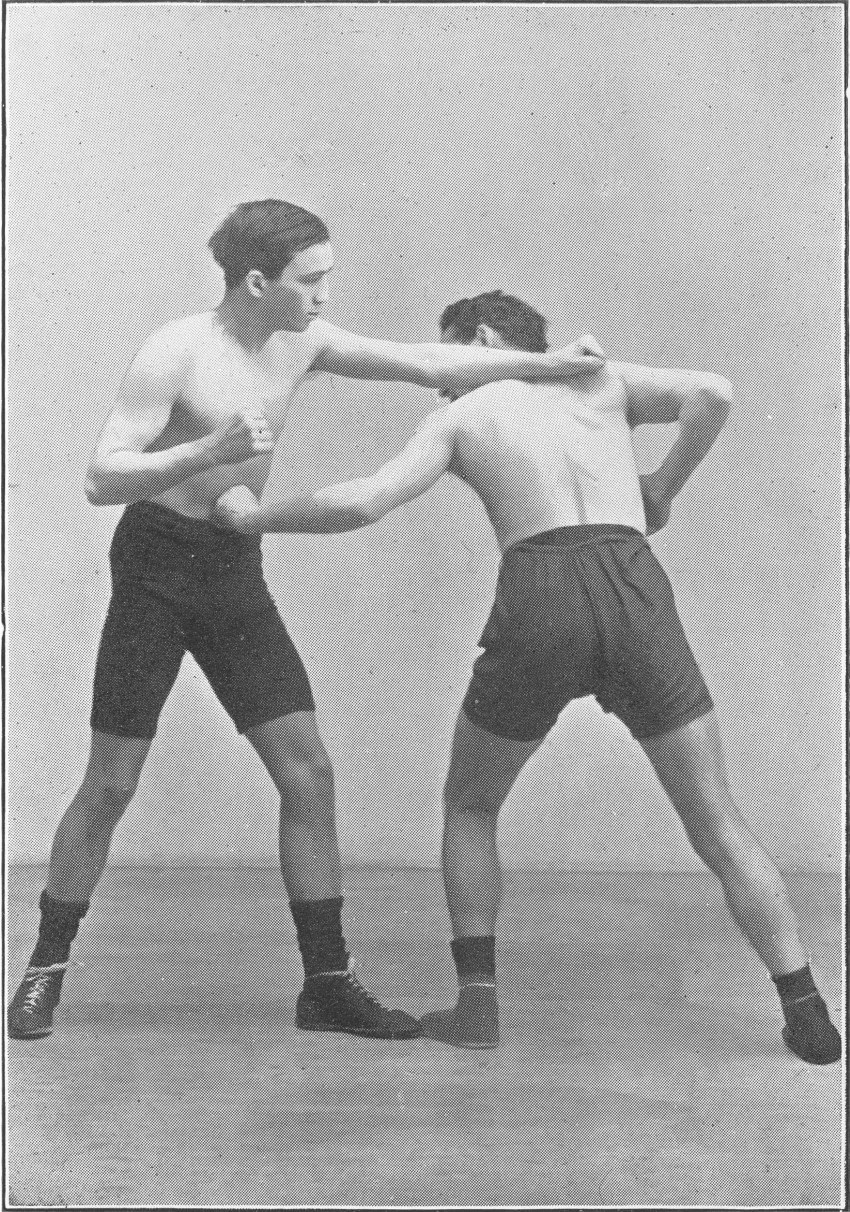
When the Physiologists Flattered to Deceive.

Nelson, perhaps, plumed himself more than any other boxer in history on this durability of his. He was intensely proud of his soubriquet, "the Durable Dane," and would loudly boast that he could never be worn down and that he was and always would be immalleable to even the fiercest and most persistent human hammering. The Battler had himself thoroughly examined by physiological experts, and would publish the results as a gleeful self-appreciation, in which he suggested that he was not only the very hardest and toughest combination of bone, fat, sinew and muscle ever discovered, but that he might even prove to have been immortally and immutably endowed with these attributes. What is more wonderful still, quite a number of people were disposed to believe that the Battler was justified in his insinuations. Until he had the misfortune to encounter Ad. Wolgast, a man who was almost as hard and tough as himself, fully as hard a puncher, and, above all, a decidedly faster and cleverer boxer, if not exactly a past-master in either department.



A TIME SHOT.

Driscoll has been drawing back feigning retreat and now suddenly stops his opponent's advance with a perfectly timed left shot to the mouth.



A STRAIGHT LEFT COUNTER TO THE PIT OF THE STOMACH AFTER
HAVING DRAWN AND DUCKED YOUR OPPONENT'S STRAIGHT LEFT
LEAD FOR THE FACE

Even then Wolgast had to punish Nelson for forty rounds before the referee felt himself impelled to intervene, despite Nelson's protests—a fact which either goes far to support the Battler's claim to the possession of superabundant toughness and almost inexhaustible stamina—or else considerably lowers Wolgast's claims to a very great boxing ability.

That defeat marked the close of the Battler's career, and should have demonstrated to the world that boxing skill will always beat mere brute force, when the other qualities which go to the make-up of a successful pugilist are at all equal. For from that time on Nelson was doomed to defeat whenever he met a really clever opponent. Owen Moran knocked him out for the first time in his career, and the Battler was forced to realise that his powers as a drawing card had almost departed.

They all go the Same Way Home.

All the then great thumpers and rough-house scrappers, the "Bear-Cats" and "Whirlwinds," the "Once Round" So-and-so's or the "Knock-Out" Thingumajigs, are going down the same road. Poor Stanley Ketchel was murdered by a farm hand, but Papke and Klaus had to taste the bitters of repeated defeats, while the men at the top of the tree these days, such as Benny Leonard, Jack Britton, Johnny Kilbane, Ted (Kid) Lewis, Eugene Criqui, Georges Carpentier, Jimmy Wilde, etc., are all famed far more for their skill than for their potency as battering rams. Boxers to-day are losing, where they have not already lost, their old faith in "Bear-Cat Man-Eating" tactics, and the straight left is coming back to its own; That it may really return to its old kingdom, and that it may for ever henceforward hold its own, has been to a large extent the inspiration of this little treatise. For the left-hand play, the true straight left-hand, can never be ousted as the supreme weapon, provided it be always employed both straight, hard and often.

CHAPTER IV

On the Cultivation of Straight Hitting.

There is surely no need to refer to Euclid for confirmation of the obvious fact that the shortest distance between any two points must of necessity be the straight line between them. Every boxer, no matter how small his intelligence otherwise, must at once admit as much—with, of course, the natural sequel that a straight punch must always get home before a round arm swinging one, provided of course that both start at the same time. That a straight punch can also even give a swinging one at start as well as a beating in time, is a point on which any boxer can satisfy himself after a very few experiments. These two propositions are, I believe, generally accepted as facts, but there is a third over which the majority of modern boxers would appear to have stumbled pretty badly; at least, one must assume that they do stumble and have stumbled over it, if one is to form any conclusions from their practice, and that third point is the relative power of straight and round arm hitting.

Round Arm swings are far less Forceful than they Look.

It seems so certain to them that a round arm blow must necessarily be ever so much more forceful than a straight one. The sensation of vigour suggested by a full revolution of the arm and the further sensation that every ounce of the weight of the body is being carried behind it as though it were being all *thrown* at the recipient, is so fascinating that they cannot resist the notion that their swinging deliveries are powerful enough to knock down a brick wall.

As there are no similar sensations accompanying a straight lead or jab, or even a hook (which is, after all, but a variant of the straight punch) they intoxicate themselves with the lust of the swing, and forgetting all about the need for accuracy, both in timing and aim, the risk of injury to their hands, or even the value of economy of time and balance, continue to swing with more or less success at the expense of other swingers or of feeble straight punchers, until they have the misfortune to run up against a really accurate and forceful straight hitter—and then they also meet with disaster without being able in the least to understand why or how.

The Practical Impossibility of Aiming a Swing Accurately.

For quite apart from the loss of valuable time wasted by the swinging delivery, it is also practically impossible to aim a swing accurately. The swinger can only let one go in the hope that it will land there or thereabouts, while thanks partly to the time a swing occupies in starting and in delivery, the boxer who is temporarily filling the role of a target, is given many more opportunities of avoiding its arrival. The path of a swing can be gauged almost with certitude, and consequently the man at whom, it is aimed has the option of either jumping back out of its reach, of stepping in within its reach (so that the glove will pass round behind the back of his head), or of ducking under it. Either of these alternative courses will tend to disturb the swinger's balance, and will therefore render him more or less at the other fellow's mercy—at least for a time—a disadvantage attending the swing which can never attach to any straight punch, since whether the latter be avoided by stepping back, by ducking or by a parry, the straight hitter can or should be able

to recover his ground or position for attack or defence without the loss or waste of any appreciable time.

The Vast Increase in Damaged Hands.

That the modern boxer suffers far more from damaged hands than his predecessors used to do, is, or should be, a well-known fact. But the reason for this phenomenon would seem to have been disregarded or unnoticed. It has in some quarters been ascribed to the extra force imparted to the modern punch, but this is absurd on the face of it, and is unsupported by the slightest evidence. The old-time prize-fighters and boxers always made a practice of hitting straight, landing their punches fairly and squarely with the knuckles of the hand, and of thereby taking the jar of the impact on the part best fitted by nature to support it. A swinging punch may land anyhow, and by no means infrequently with an open glove (which will, of course, minimise the effect of the blow, though it may increase—unfairly—the length of the reach). It may arrive in such wise that only the thumb comes into contact with the head of the body at which it is aimed—and in no possible instance can it arrive in such wise as to enable the pain or penalty of the impact to be properly distributed—as it should be—throughout the whole length of the arm. All the bones, sinews and muscles of the hand and arm have been so placed by nature as to support the damaging effects of a hard punch when this is delivered straight and accurately, whereas the, full jar of the impact of a swing has to be borne by the hand and wrist alone. The swinger's hands or wrists *must* go in time and in short time at that. And this is surely an almost overwhelming argument in favour of the straight delivery as opposed to the swing.

The Economies and Other Advantages of the Straight Left.

With the straight left's superiority as a forceful weapon, I propose to deal more fully in another chapter, but a little consideration will show that a blow which is delivered home, with all the support of the arm behind it, must naturally be more effective than one which has the support of the hand and wrist only. In fact, the power of the swing is vastly more apparent than real, whereas that of the straight punch is exactly the reverse—more real than apparent. It is, in fact, not only more economical both of time and effort, more certain of reaching its target, more easy to recover position from if its aim and force have been miscalculated, but it is finally both less injurious to the hands and more effective in its results. But in order that it may possess all these advantages, it must necessarily be accurate in its delivery, and it should, above all, be a real punch and not merely a push. The latter may score a few points, provided it is sent home, but it can never by any chance succeed in winning a contest if one's opponent is at all resolute. For no matter how unpolished or unscientific he may be, he can always afford to disregard a pushing or tapping left, and without wasting time or energy in defence, can force his way in to certain victory.

The Straight Left as a Winning Weapon.

But if the straight left is to be regarded as the winning weapon, it must necessarily be—first of all—*straight*, that is to say, accurately aimed, and this quality, simple and natural though it appears, would seem to be one which the average modern boxer seems incapable of arriving at.

Yet, if he has ever received a boxing lesson in his life, if he has ever even looked at the prescribed preliminary pose, recommended by every textbook

or article on the subject of boxing, he would, one would imagine, quite naturally acquire the habit of straight hitting. For a boxer who merely assumes the pose, which has been accepted not only by all the authorities as the classic model, but has even been tacitly acknowledged to be such by those boxers who avoid or abandon it in action, yet who nevertheless patronise it when facing a camera, cannot fail to realise—if he thinks at all—that in so doing he is shaping himself to deliver a straight left hand as his initial assault.

The Edgewise Stance.

The novice is carefully instructed to stand as nearly as possible edgewise to his opponent. He is instructed to poise his weight evenly distributed on either leg and to keep erect on the balls of his feet, with his left arm advanced, both as an offensive and as a defensive measure, held loosely enough to enable him to check his opponent's attempts at aggression with a shapely delivered punch and which he can alternatively use either by feints or actual offensive movements as a means of opening a breach for attack on its own part.

Yet all this early instruction would seem to be speedily forgotten by the majority of both our professional and amateur boxers as soon as they embark on their serious careers. Too impatient to study or practise the arts of feinting for openings and consequently forced to experience the difficulties of forcing a passage through the defence of their opponents, they try to discover a path round them, while they further permit themselves to be led astray by the apparent extra forcefulness of the round arm or swinging delivery.

CHAPTER V

The Platform Punch Ball.

I am inclined to suspect, too, that the decline of the straight punch may be in some measure traced to the general use of the platform punch ball. Mind you, I am not proposing to insinuate anything against the use of this form of training, but rather to criticise the way in which it is employed.

For, I suppose, with the view of making sure of being able to punch the ball at all, and with a quite understandable desire to avoid making themselves look ridiculous to any casual spectators in their early ball-punching displays, they fall into the habit of "tapping" the swinging ball from a short range. They stand close up to the ball and they rarely if ever shift their position. Then, since it is, or at all events, since it *seems* to be less difficult to hit the ball and to keep it swinging, with a full round-arm swing, or with semicircular blows, it is somewhat natural that the ball punching novice should perfect the half hook or half swinging style of ball punching; with the result that ball punching as an item of the training curriculum might almost as well be cut out altogether.

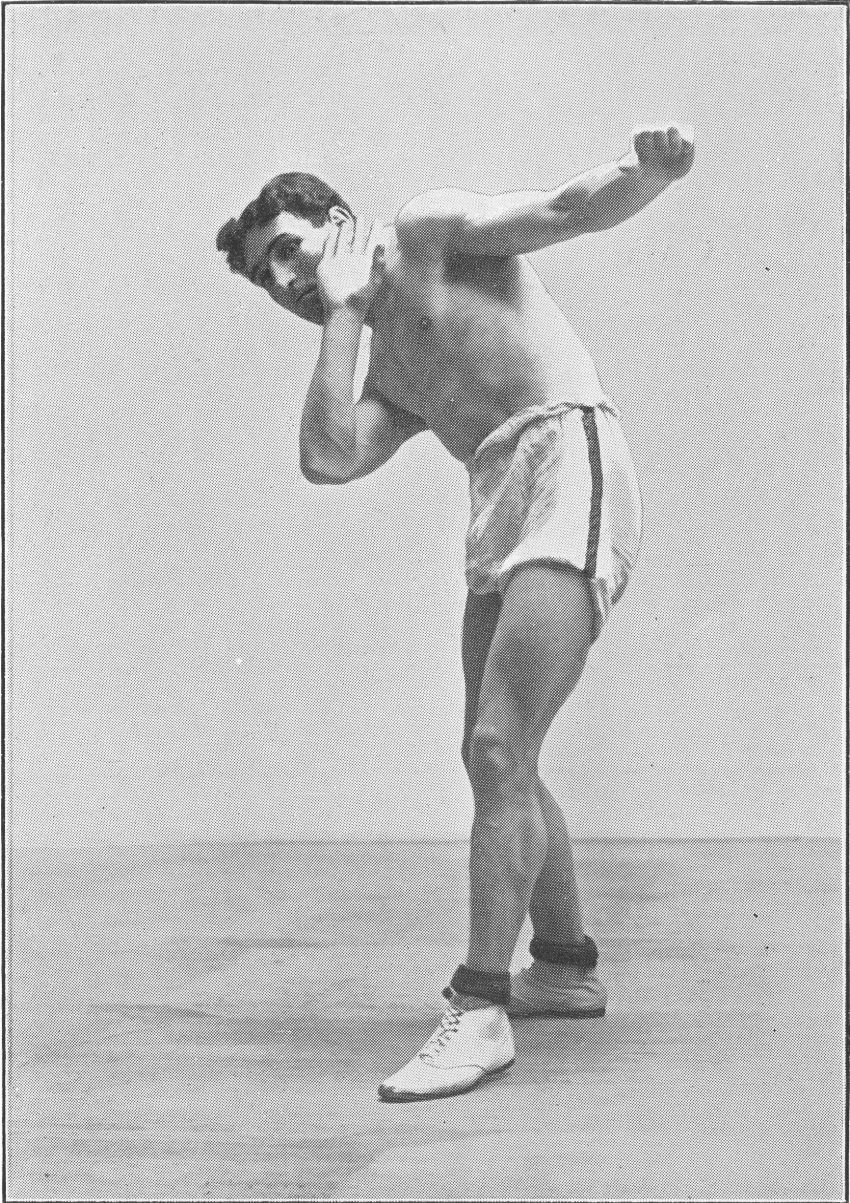
And How it Should be Treated.

Yet when all is said and done, ball punching, practised as it should be practised, will do more to develop straight hitting perhaps than any other means. I would therefore strongly recommend the aspiring boxer to disregard criticism, either self-conscious or from onlookers. He is practising with the ball with a view to develop his boxing abilities, and should consequently firmly resolve to keep this

main object in view. The punch ball was invented for the primary purpose of developing a boxer's ability to hit both hard and straight. After all, it is easier to punch even a swinging ball than a dodging, ducking, side-stepping and dancing opponent. The range can be calculated with greater certainty, and the ball is incapable of warding off or parrying the punches aimed at it.

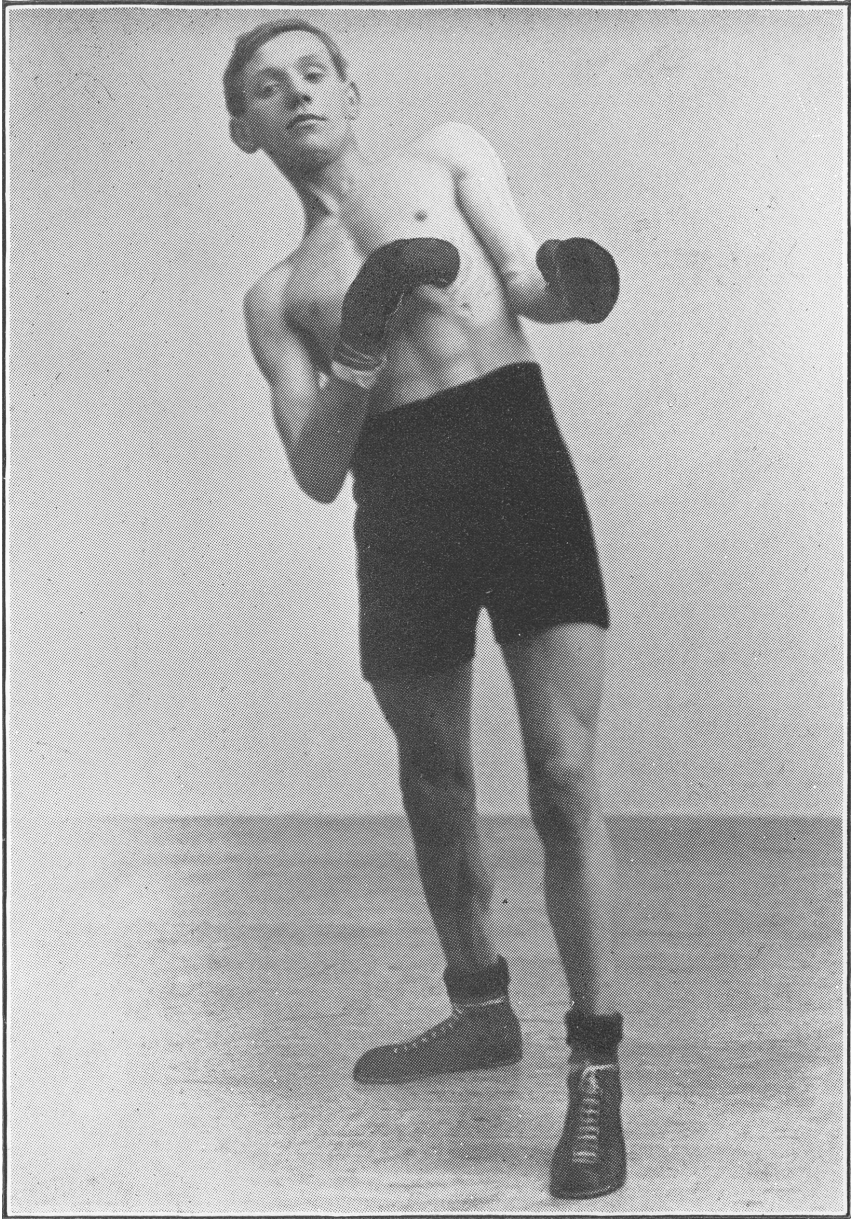
Regard it as a Live Opponent.

Stand up to it, therefore, at about the distance you would stand from an opponent whom you were facing in the ring, and punch at it straight with the left hand. Practise punching it, with simple, straight leads, and practise no other style of punch until you are quite satisfied that you can hit it whenever and however you want so to do. *Then*, but not till then, vary your straight leads or jabs with right ones. Only see that they are right *crosses*, that is to say, right-hand punches, which would, in a contest, shoot over your opponent's left shoulder to his face. These being sent along a slight diagonal will vary the angle of the rebound from the platform and will enable you to develop an additional accuracy with your straight lefts, which can be shot home either alternately or in varying intermission with your right crosses and, thereby, two punches have been mastered—and here let me advise you to regard your ball punching practice simply and solely in its relations to your boxing practice. Avoid with the utmost care all temptations to indulge in fancy-work. Remember that you are not trying to become a fancy ball-puncher, unless you have ambitions in that direction. But if you have, you would be well advised to surrender your boxing ambitions. There have been men who could make a living either in the ring or as expert fancy ball-punchers, but the two professions do not mix well as a rule.



FRED DYER'S LEFT HOOK.

Posed as though about to swing his left, preparatory to bending the arm and hooking it, as an opponent attempts to step within its circle.



JIMMY WILDE.

The "Tylorstown Terror" rarely uses either arms or gloves for defensive purposes, preferring to sway or swerve back from an attack.

**Avoid all Temptation for Fancy Work and Frills
in your Ball-punching Practice.**

You have made up your mind to become a boxer, so forget that the ball can possess any greater fascination than that wielded by the wall machine. Cut out the fancy tricks just as you have already, as I hope you have, cut out all inclinations to regard your ball punching exercises as a light and easy performance which you can run through in any old way. You will probably, indeed almost certainly, be persuaded, or will persuade yourself to take three-minute spells at the ball. It isn't a bad idea, but if you are going to treat these spells as rounds in time, why not go the further step and make them rounds in very essence, as far as it is possible to do so. For example, don't be content with the ordinary method of tapping the ball and of interspersing your taps with occasional blows with your full strength. This system of exercise will admittedly develop your wind, staying power, hitting muscles and the power of your punch—to some extent—but there are other exercises which will produce these results with greater benefit to yourself. Regard the punch ball rather as an aid to accuracy and straight hitting, not forgetting, of course, such punches as will develop your ability to hit forcibly from as many various angles and positions as you can imagine. Be very certain that it will be scarcely possible for you to imagine too many variations in this direction. For in the course of a serious contest, you may find yourself most curiously situated at times, and if you have trained yourself in the preservation of balance and the arts of accurate and forceful aim, no matter how placed, you will frequently be able to send home a surprise punch which may easily carry you a considerable distance along the path to victory.

Fight the Ball as though you were in a Ring.

Once you have acquired the knack of keeping the ball on the move, abandon your stationary pose and learn how to *fight* the ball. Spar up to it as you would to an active opponent in the ring. Dance round it, advance, retire, dash past it, duck under it, upper-cut it at times. Tap it, now and then, of course, just as you would tap an opponent's guard in the course of feinting. Hook at times; in fact, hook frequently, in order to develop the force of the punches you are going to deliver with a bent arm, a process which will be found useful, but as a general rule, when hitting out with your left from any distance school yourself into the habit of hitting straight. Cross your right or hook a right punch, and then practise the knack of delivering straight lefts, from the edgewise classical pose, at the diagonally crossing ball. And above all, *never swing at the ball.*

The "Campbell" Punch Ball.

"But," it may be argued, "it is scarcely possible to do all that you recommend with the average platform punch-ball. In the first place, this is usually fixed up close to a wall, and so if a man were to try to duck under it, dance round it and generally plunge about, as you advise, he would run into the wall, trip up over the posts and stays, and generally make a fool of himself."

Well, that is so. But then when you are lucky enough to find a gymnasium where the punch ball and its platform are either fixed to the ceiling only, or are at worst supported by four uprights only, and in the middle of the room, or thereabouts, you can follow out the plan I have suggested.

So make a point of always selecting a gym so fitted and stick to it for your practice.

Better still, perhaps, if you can afford it, purchase

one of Colonel Ronald Campbell's portable punch balls for this; although it costs a couple of guineas (I believe) it is well worth the money.

The argument against it, that it requires an assistant and cannot be punched without, is negligible, for any assistant, your sister, for example, will do at a pinch. The thing is perfectly simple. All that you have to do is to get your helper to hold out the punch ball shield—well away from him or her, be it understood—and then you can let fly.

The human platform can then deflect the shield at will, and thus practise you in the art of sending in the right punch. For it can be so placed or held that you can either hit straight, hook, upper-cut, send in a right or left hander, as its position requires. The human platform will direct this part of the business, and if he is your trainer, you can imagine the delight with which he will do so.

Then, again, he can shift the target at the very moment of your delivery. Can raise it, lower it, advance it, draw it back and so develop your ability to punch a shifting target.

Get one and practise with it, change and change about with your partner. Try which one of you can land the greatest number of consecutive punches and you will soon be able to realise its advantages.

Finally, let the human platform arm himself with a glove on his disengaged hand and give you a reminder every time you make a mistake or a miss. You will then, I fancy, agree with me that the "Campbell" punch ball has come to stay and is going to make a big difference to British boxing.

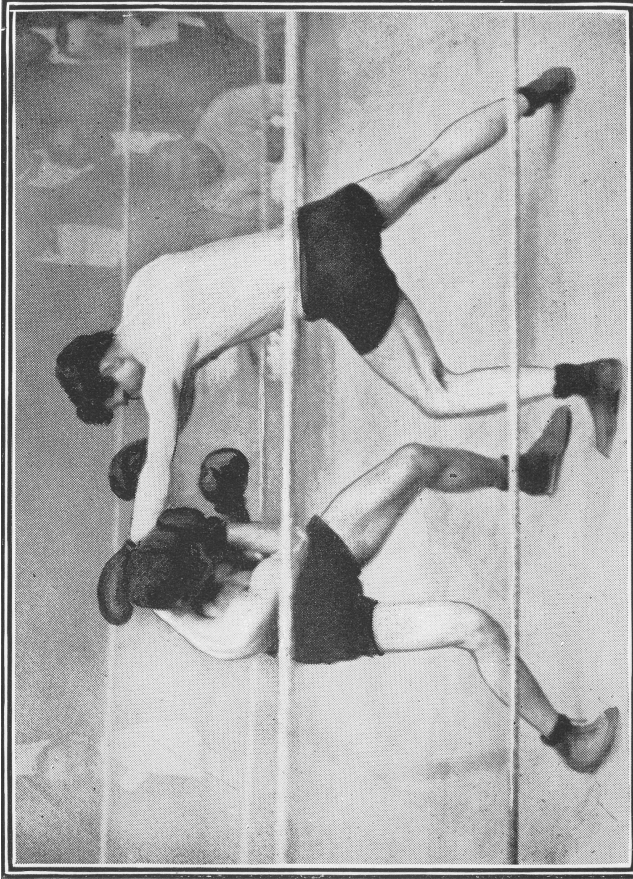
Treat your Shadow-Boxing Practice Seriously.

In shadow boxing again, which is usually a most perfunctory performance by the average boxer in training, try your hardest to make this resemble an actual contest as closely as you possibly can. Don't

just move round, sparring, feinting and hitting at nothing, simply and solely for the sake of the exercise as so many boxers do. This popular method has its uses, of course, but it can be easily rendered far more useful than it usually is.

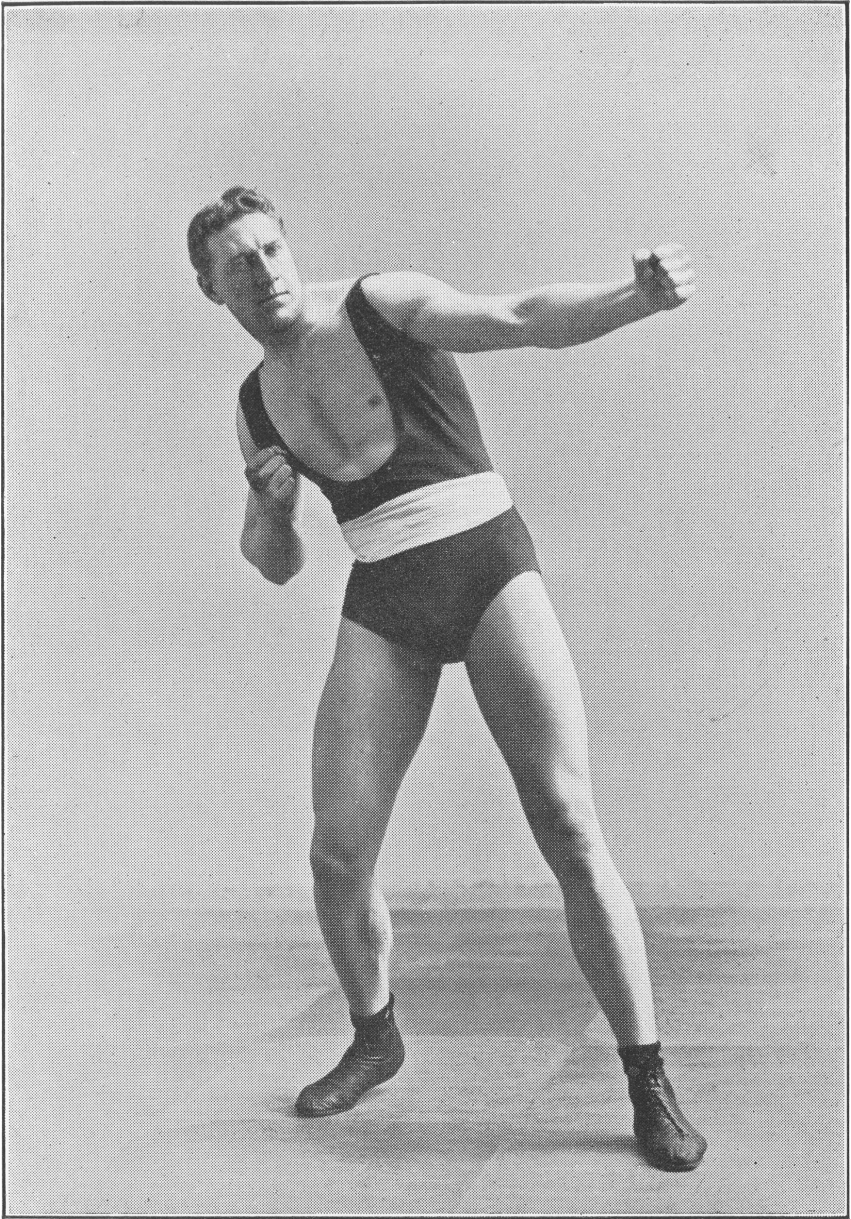
Fred Welsh's Shadow-Boxing Practice for Straight-Left Work.

Fred Welsh, by the way, who was not originally famed as a straight left-hand operator, and who relied so extensively on his infighting and close range tactics, could nevertheless employ a straight left to great advantage whenever the occasion demanded, as he proved so conclusively in his world championship battle against Willie Ritchie. It will, and should, be remembered that it was really his left hand which won that bout for him. Have you forgotten how he danced in and out, ducked under Ritchie's right crosses and hooks and planted left after left on Willie's face and body? Well, Freddie picked up and developed his straight left hand in shadow-boxing practice. Welsh training in public and by himself were two different people. I have frequently watched him introduce a distinctly original idea into his shadow-boxing exercise. I have never either seen or heard of its practice by anyone else, and can only imagine that Welsh practised it because he was conscious that since he had never been famous for straight long-range battling, it would be advisable to cultivate it as much as possible. This may or may not have been the case, but if I am correct in my assumption, this is itself as eloquent a testimony to the value of the straight left-hand school as anyone could desire, seeing that one of the favourite arguments of its critics rests on the fact that Fred Welsh, the first Briton to become the recognised light-weight Champion of the World, cannot be included in the list of its members.



PACKEY MCFARLAND'S OPEN GLOVED LEFT HAND.

An incident of the third meeting between McFarland and Welsh. Freddie, it will be noticed, has ducked under McFarland's lead, and is covering his face with his open right glove, his body with his right arm, and at the same time has his own left ready for action.



BOMBARDIER BILLY WELLS IN A POSE SHOWING LENGTH OF REACH AND EASE OF ACTION.

But to return to Welsh's shadow-boxing. The world's light-weight champion would mark out on the floor of his gymnasium a square the exact size of the ring in which he was going to contest a forthcoming bout. Then, taking up his station in one corner, he would advance diagonally across the ring to the opposite corner, delivering straight left-hand punches as he went. He would pursue this path back and forth perhaps three times in succession, practising solely the straight left-lead and guard. He would then go over the same ground again and again, practising the left lead and right cross, the left lead and right upper-cut, etc., and for a period of at least two rounds would make the straight left-lead a regular first, no matter how he might vary the movements of his right hand.

**Work Out or Adopt a System which will
Suit you Best.**

I have merely mentioned this practice of Welsh's. I do not recommend it, since each of you must discover the training method which best suits your peculiarities. But I *do* most strongly recommend you all to introduce as large a proportion of straight left-hand work into all your training exercises as you can contrive to do, and most particularly so with your sparring practice.

CHAPTER VI

Study Your Sparring Partners.

Just at first you may find it is far from an easy matter to penetrate the defences of your sparring partners. But if you will devote care and thought to the study of feinting—a sadly neglected art, one regrets to have to say—you will find that difficulties diminish. Always remember that your feet are as important elements in your success as your hands, and that by side-stepping, retiring and also by sudden and unexpected advances it is often quite possible to catch an opponent off his guard and then discover an easy way through. Watch your man carefully, especially when you suspect him of an intention to attack. For then you can often surprise him with a swift time thrust (as it is styled in fencing). This is one of the simplest and most effective punches. Feign a retreat in such wise that you may lure your opponent into a rush. Then stop suddenly and shoot your left to his face. This will, in the majority of cases, be temporarily unguarded, since if he is coming on filled with a desire to demolish you, he will generally dash in with either his hands down, or else, if up, at all events, drawn back in preparation for a furious flailing onslaught. In any event, *he* will be coming on towards you and at such a pace or with such energy that he will be unable to either side-step, swerve or even duck with either ease or comfort to himself. Your time thrust or punch will consequently be far more likely to get home without interruption, especially if you have trained your left hand to obey your eye, by careful practice in shadow boxing and with a punch ball. Finally, your punch,

when it arrives, should be distinctly effective. It cannot help being a forceful one, since it will carry with it, not only all the energy you have imparted to it personally, but also that with which your opponent has himself generously presented it, by the force of his own advance.

All of which brings me back to the second essential of the straight left-hand as the most valuable boxing asset, viz., that after its accuracy has been carefully developed, the most careful attention should next be devoted to the development of its forceful delivery.

The Development of Force in Punching Power.

Force is always the final argument in everything. The finest and most perfect strategy can effect little or indeed anything without solid force to back it up and carry out its plans. So while we must concede to skill the pride of place in the armoury of boxing, skill alone will not win verdicts (and most certainly will fail to record knock-out wins) unless this same skill is backed up, or, indeed, rendered actually visible by the power of the punches which it directs. But these punches should not, cannot indeed, properly derive their power from a wild exertion of the whole body. A punch need only travel a few inches to send even the strongest and toughest man crashing to the canvas. In fact, the very hardest punches which have ever been delivered in a contest have only been fully appreciated by the spectators by their visible result. They usually seem to be such light, simple affairs, effortless to all appearance. And to a certain extent, almost effortless in actual fact. Yet the recipients have candidly confessed afterwards that they thought the roof of the building must have fallen in on top of their heads.

Accurate Timing is the real Secret.

For the whole secret of the actual force of a terrific

punch is the perfect accuracy of its "timing," co-ordinated, of course, with the accuracy of its aim. Perhaps I may be able best to express my meaning by the comparison of the "carpet drive" at cricket, when a batsman, swaying forward almost gently, with the grace of a silver birch tree in a breeze (as I have seen it described) will despatch the fastest deliveries of an express bowler, skimming over the turf, until they rattle up against the boundary rails. All that the spectator sees is a step forward, which brings the bat firmly to meet the ball as it rises from the pitch at exactly the moment when it has gathered its greatest momentum from its bounce. There is a crisp, sharp, musical sound, and away the ball whizzes.

The "Carpet-Drive" Parallel.

Yet those "carpet drives," with all their economy of both actual physical force and effort, are far more forceful and incidentally more profitable than the tremendous full-shouldered drives, struck with all the power the batsman can exert, which may send the ball out of the ground and which may on the other hand, land it into the clutches of some fielder, "out in the country."

Exactly the same principle governs, or should govern, the science or art of hard punching in the boxing ring. Indeed, it governs it far more closely. For whereas at cricket it will frequently be more advisable to open one's shoulders, jump well out of one's ground, and "loft" the ball—since that is about the only way to treat it as it ought to be treated—it is a distinctly wasteful at all times, and usually a decidedly barren policy into the bargain, to endeavour to hurl one's arm, with the whole weight of one's body behind it, at either the ducked head or body of an opponent.

The Straight Punch and the "Haymaker."

In the first place, it is far easier to miss with a punch than with a bat, and in the second, the results of missing may easily be very much more disastrous. If one misses with a huge swing, or "haymaker," as the Americans term it, one is practically certain to become unbalanced, and consequently at the mercy of one's opponent; while if the miss happens to be only partial, that is to say, a miss with the glove and not with the arm, the odds are that the blow will be delivered incorrectly (*i.e.*, not with the *knuckle* part of the hand), in which case the puncher is liable to be more severely hurt than the punchee. He may even break his hand, and thereby practically destroy all his chances, not only of victory, but of a prolonged career in the ring.

Ad. Wolgast's Broken Bones.

Ad. Wolgast, be it remembered, was distinctly fond of swinging his punches anyhow, and by no means particular as to how they landed, with the result that he broke his arm on Jack Redmond's head and elbows, and broke it since then on at least two occasions, notably in one of his last contests, *viz.*, that with Fred Welsh in New York.

The big swing which goes hurtling through the air, and which looks such a terribly devastating affair, can in any case only carry with it the force of the deliverer. There is all the difference in the results which exist between the striking of a motionless cricket ball or the kicking of a motionless football and the striking or kicking of one which is rapidly coming towards one.

Why the Swinger Misses so Frequently.

I may add that the swing has even another and greater disadvantage than this. For since, in order

to swing, a man must necessarily make his arm traverse a fairly lengthy arc in the air, he can scarcely fail to convey some intimation of the blow intended, and that warning may and probably will be sufficiently pronounced to advise the man aimed at to either sway his head back out of the way or to move sufficiently far forward to cause the swing to miss altogether, either by passing behind or around the neck of the intended recipient, or else over his head, and consequently resulting in a sheer waste of energy without the disturbance of anything except the atmosphere. And even supposing that the swerving head has not moved sufficiently out of range to escape actual contact, the punch, when it does land, will in most cases only succeed in striking a target which is moving away—and it is surely scarcely necessary for me to point out that a blow of this kind is most unlikely to prove very effective.

Heavy swings, which get “home,” are frequently very effective, but I am prepared to maintain—and also to prove by physical demonstrations—that they can never be relied upon for accuracy of aim. Nor can they ever be proved to be harder blows or even as hard as the correct straight delivery. They only *look* heavier.

Why I have Occasionally Swung Punches Myself.

Of course, I have myself swung, at times. Every man who wants to mount high in the boxing profession will have perforce to pay some little attention to this department of hitting. For variety in style, method, tactics and strategy is one of the prime elements of success. I would like to lay it down as a golden rule for all ambitious boxers, that they should never swing—except when occasion demanded.

The only Exception to the Rule.

For instance, it is sometimes useful or rather may

be profitable to let go a few swings and even a few apparently wild ones, for strategical purposes and with the view of suggesting both to one's opponent and to his advisers in his corner that one is mentally worried and even possibly in physical distress.

Again, occasions will frequently arise when it will be possible to land a swinging punch only. (For you will remember that I laid stress on the necessity for practising the art of hitting from every conceivable angle and from every possibly imaginable position). Say that your opponent is covered up, that is to say, that he has missed you, or that you have side-stepped his attack and that he is consequently going past you. He has smothered his face and head with his gloves and protected his ribs with his elbows and forearms. In such a position, you may, as I have described elsewhere, be presented with a splendid opportunity for delivering "the rabbit-killer," but there will be other occasions when you may be able to cause him more pain and to thereby secure a better advantage for yourself, by the delivery of an upward swinging blow to the pit of his stomach. Yet all these are but the exceptions which are proverbially said to prove the rule, that straight punches are and always will be far more effective in the long run than any swinging deliveries.

CHAPTER VII

The Straight Left in Defense.

In the recording of points scored, by which referees are solely justified in the rendering of their decisions, preference is, or invariably should be, given to "Attack." It is true that points are also recorded for skill in defence and for style, etc., but the chief stress is laid on attack. Successful attack, be it remembered—a point which the majority of average spectators, and which, I am sorry to have to say, so many referees are apt to forget. No boxer should ever be credited, as so many are, for any merits they may imagine they have earned for useless, unprofitable pursuit, no matter how persistent. Yet you will see and hear verdicts given amid volumes of applause to men who have simply charged and kept on charging throughout a contest, who have kept up a perpetual rain of blows at their opponents, but who have failed to send home more than a very small percentage of these to the only targets which the rules of boxing recognise, and who, so far as points actually scored are concerned, that is to say, in the form of clean hits delivered with the knuckle part of the gloves on the front and sides of their opponent's head or body, are actually badly in arrears at the close. But, unfortunately, in these instances both the referee and the spectators have permitted themselves to be led astray by the fire and fury of the attacks, which have overshadowed in their minds their ill-success. They have seen that one of the contestants was forced mainly to retreat, and noting this they failed to notice that he was really fighting a series of skilful rearguard actions, that he was continually

pinking his rushing antagonist, and, in fact, generally accumulating a highly respectable score of points.

Such a case as this is of course distinctly rough on the better boxer, and at times may have its influence on his subsequent career. He may come to the conclusion that there is very little, if anything, to be gained by the study or practice of skilful boxing, and he may consequently wander away into the rushing, swinging path himself.

Yet, although he is entitled to sympathy for his unmerited misfortune, he is nevertheless largely to blame for it. No referee is infallible, and there are and always will be referees who are unable to resist the contagion of popular enthusiasm. The referee may firmly resolve that he will render an absolutely impartial verdict. He may even think that he has done so—and yet it may happen that the verdict has actually been given by the partisan sympathies of the spectators. There may have been many interested in the fortunes of a favourite. They may have been so desperately anxious to see him returned as victor as to obscure their vision of the feats of his opponent. In the ordinary phrase, they can only see their own man; with the result that believing the desires of their hearts, they not only satisfy themselves that he has won, but actually succeed in hypnotising the referee into a similar frame of mind. These things are all in the luck of the game and should not only be recognised, but also allowed for by every boxer.

We all have to fall back at times. In fact, as I have again explained in yet another place*, it is quite possible to win contests by merely ducking, dodging, side-stepping, feinting and dancing away. I believe I then stated that it was possible to win a knock-out victory over a certain class of opponents without placing a glove on them. This, of course, is actually an exaggeration of fact, though a perfectly

* "Ringcraft" by Jim Driscoll. Price 2/- nett.

correct statement in all other essentials. My actual meaning was that by a process of continual dodging and by thereby forcing your opponent to repeated misses and other abortive attacks, you can reduce him to such a state of exhaustion that he will collapse through sheer loss of wind and stamina.

You take him out of his stride, make him travel and keep him travelling at a much faster pace than any to which he is accustomed or trained, and in such a case neither his organs nor will-power can possibly withstand the strain. Against this it might be argued that you will yourself be in an equally evil case, but such is very far from the probabilities, if one only plays the game as it should be played. For the man who attacks and misses, takes far more out of himself than the man who is content merely to avoid.

But in actual practice, of course, the man who is playing the defensive game should vary his policy of "getting away" by frequent introductions of the "stop" policy.

By this I do not mean the "stop" in ordinary acceptance of the term, which implies the parry or guard, or even the other and more valuable method of stopping, which results from a well applied and timely push to your opponent's hitting arm or shoulder.

The "stop" with which I am now dealing is that applied by a stiff, straight left jab. Even when you and your opponent are practically stationary, that is to say, are not dancing about, but are merely employing eye feints or those other "draws" for a lead, which consist in threatening movements of the hands and arms, not forgetting leg and foot shuffles, you can frequently slip in a sudden and disconcerting jab to the other fellow's face at the very moment when he is about to let go a real punch at you.

You will then have "beaten him to the punch,"

as the phrase goes. In other words, you will have coaxed him into starting a punch, but will have met him with your own after he has committed himself to his, but before he can get his home. This is, of course, only to be done by the exercise of the most accurate judgment of time and distance and can be best developed by the use of Colonel Campbells patent punch ball, to which allusion has already been made.

But perhaps the most effective defensive straight left-handed "stop" is that which is, or should be employed, against the determined rushes or persistently attacking opponent. For these men are really, after all, the easiest men in the world to beat at the boxing game.

With a certain class of opponent, I might almost say with every brand of opponent you are likely to meet, it is always best to coax them into as much attacking as you can. For it stands to reason that the man who has committed himself to a serious attack has thereby inevitably weakened his powers of defence. He has deprived himself both of the power and ability to recover himself, that is to say, to change directly from attack to defence.

Hence the advantages which will accrue to the boxer who has carefully studied and practised the retreating game. One can draw this class of man after one, build him up with hopes that he is going to get you "cornered," or force you back against the ropes, and then just as he is about to let go, slide away from him and leave him with a little more of the sickness of heart which always comes from deferred hopes.

Sooner or later he will, he must, inevitably relax his watchfulness—and then will come your opportunity. Dart in like a flash of lightning, deal out one, two or three swift jabs as opportunity occurs, and then dart away again.

Such tactics as these will in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred bring your opponent charging after you again, and as a natural consequence present you with numerous other opportunities for repeating the dose—until you can plainly see that both his strength and wind have nearly left him, when your time will have arrived to go in and finish him off.

A very useful method of forcing the men you meet into these rushing and persistent onslaughts—the simplest and surest, in fact—is that of a gradual but steady retreat to commence with. Fall back steadily as the other man comes on, and at about the same pace. But check him as he advances with occasional left stabs. These should, indeed must be, stiff punches delivered with a straight or almost straight arm. Let the arm shoot out to meet his face as he comes on, but be careful to avoid any preliminary “pull-back” of the arm, shoulder or elbow, before you thrust. Take all the driving power you may require from your legs and back. Remember that the punch must be a snappy one, if it is to be really effective, but remember at the same time that it will gain a very appreciable amount of its force from the pace at which the recipient is coming to meet it.

Accuracy Essential.

But first, last, and all the time, particularly be careful that you *always* get home with these jabs. For serious trouble if not disaster will almost inevitably be the penalty you will pay for missing. Yes, I know quite well that it is easier to miss than to hit, but then it is really easier to hit than it is to miss with the jabs I am describing.

For if you are falling back correctly, are conducting your retreat at precisely the right pace, and are careful to keep your balance perfect, you should experience little difficulty either in selecting your opportunities or in making sure of your aim. You

ought to have the distance measured to a fraction of an inch. It should not be difficult to accurately judge the pace at which the other fellow is coming towards you, and then, since you will seize an opportunity when you are reasonably certain that your opponent is just starting a punch at you, you will have been presented with a practically open target. For in order to hit you he must necessarily uncover his face.

There will, of course, be occasions when he will keep this protected, but on those you will wisely refrain from even thinking of a time jab, and continue your retreat.

Stop Suddenly and Hit Straight.

As a final reminder, in case you should accuse me of having failed to cover the whole ground, you can rest assured if you are retreating and your pursuer has really made up his mind to attack with all his force, that he will make a final leap to do so. This will, of course, be necessary if he is hoping to cover the space you will have preserved between you. It will also render him more open to your jab, by the way. So that all you need do is to stop short in your retreat, shoot out a straight, absolutely stiff arm and wrist and receive his nose or mouth on the end, the knuckle part of your left glove. The faster and more vigorous his leap, the bigger the shock which he will receive. It may even happen that you will then be able to see your way clear to a quick finish, or at least to the administration of severe punishment. In any case, you will be able to congratulate yourself on having taken a good deal of the steam out of your man with that one punch, and in almost every one, that you will be well able to extract a good deal more by the delivery of two or three additional ones before you break away to resume operations. Indeed, the only fly in your

ointment will be that you will have given your opponent a very shrewd warning as to the sort of fate which will await him if he rushes again, and that you will consequently have given yourself a lot of trouble before you can persuade him to rush again.

Nevertheless, it is by no means impossible to coax any boxer whose tastes lead him on to aggression back again into this danger. As an example of this trust, I may quote the case of Young Symonds and Tancy Lee. Tancy, a veteran in years, and despite his comparatively short professional career, had always shown himself to be a perfectly cool and particularly wary boxer, well worthy of the championship he held. Yet despite all his care and experience, and despite the frequent and painful reminders which Symonds gave him of the penalties attaching to a constant pursuit, he could not refrain from the delights of the chase until the total collapse of his strength had deprived him of his belt and title.

CHAPTER VIII

The Straight Left in Attack.

I have already stated that attack is the trump suite in boxing, and have also pointed out that attack does not necessarily mean rushing or charging at or after your opponent. Attack, indeed, commences earlier than hitting. For the ideal punch, or perhaps it would be better to say the best punch, the most effective one, is a good, stiff counter, to a ducked, brushed aside, or otherwise evaded lead.

It is usually best, whenever possible, to “draw” your opponent into a lead before hitting out on your own account. The advantages gained thereby are four in number. In the first place, you have forced your opponent to commit himself to a decided step and can therefore be moderately certain of what he is about to do. Secondly, you have to a very large extent deprived him of the ability to change his position and guard swiftly enough to deal successfully with any offensive you may yourself adopt. Thirdly, by his mere action of hitting out, you will or should secure an opening of sorts, can or should make him present you with a fair target at which to aim. Fourthly, and most important of all, you will have borrowed some very considerable force from him to add to the power of your own “counter” delivery. For the more speedy and the heavier his advance or lunge towards you in the action of punching, the heavier and more painful will be the “dig” with which you meet him on his way.

The Right Cross Counter.

In the normal course of instruction in the boxing schools, the pupil is almost invariably taught that the most effective reply to the left lead is that known as

“the right cross counter,” partly because it *looks* so much more in accordance with the fitness of things, but mainly, I suspect, because when all is said and done the right cross counter, effectively and properly planted on the jaw, will almost invariably finish a contest there and then.

But, then, just because it is the normal reply to the left lead, the majority of boxers are usually careful to keep a watchful eye open for it, and for that very reason it is one of the most difficult punches to land just when one wants to place it where it will do most good. Nevertheless, it is sometimes a sound policy to try the effect of one right at the start of a contest. A good deal will depend on your man. But if you are able to feint skilfully and have thereby succeeded in “drawing” your opponent into attempting a really forceful lead, you will not infrequently be able to glimpse an opening for the right cross. If and when you do, be always careful to let it go good and hard with all your might.

You may remember that quite a number of even important ring battles, even championship battles too at that, have been won and lost by what was practically the first punch delivered. Also that in nearly every one of these cases it was a good right cross which did the trick.

The Joe Gans—Frank Erne match is a case in point. Gans won his title with one punch and then proceeded to prove himself one of the greatest fighters who ever donned a glove, and to be finally nicknamed “the Old Master.”

Yes; the right cross may often be sent home at the very start of a contest when it would be useless to attempt it against a really good man again for many a weary round. So very few really good boxers are liable to expect that their opponents will venture to attempt such a cheeky proceeding right at the start. And in boxing it is the unexpected which happens more frequently than anything else.

The Left Counter.

But this is supposed to be a treatise on the use of the left hand, and the above is consequently a digression from the path. I would ask you to bear the right cross in mind, but to rely mainly on left-hand countering as your main suite.

Make a careful study of the whole art of fencing, practise it up at all times—against the punch-ball and particularly if you have or can procure one with Colonel Campbell's hand punch-ball. Practise it when you are shadow boxing, and, above all, most sedulously practise it with your sparring partners.

Never neglect any single opportunity of improving yourself in the art of "beating your opponent to the punch."

Get your sparring partners to start punches first of all. Specified punches, if you prefer, but secondly and principally, unexpected punches, and then try to best them both in time and pace. Set up as your motto, "I will get there first." Because if you can get the man in front of you to start the punch and can be sure of sending your counter home first, you can not only rest assured that you will get home ever so much harder, but you will also be relieved of all the worries attaching to the necessities of either guard or evasion. You may sometimes, indeed frequently, be able to land a most effective wallop after you have brushed an opponent's lead to one side, because in so doing you will inevitably disturb his balance and thereby render an upset more possible. But as a general rule, you will find circumstances better adapted to the counter direct and simple.

Ducking, side-stepping, or parrying will almost invariably distract the concentration of your thoughts and consequently diminish the force of your own punch if only because your duck, side-step or parry may have presented the other fellow with an oppor-

tunity for self-recovery——while in every case he will not in such case be in full momentum. His lunge forward accompanying his punch will have almost if not quite finished and you will then have very little additional force to borrow from him.

The Methods of Punch Development.

It has been said, and with a good deal of truth, that the bed-rock of our English boxers' late inferiority to the American sloggers is to be found in the inferiority of our punching powers.

I may add from practical experience that the average American "bear-cat" or "man-eater," who is so fond of tearing in at his opponents with the intent to sweep them off the face of the earth, can generally be brought up short in mid-career and very effectually disgruntled by a series of swift, stiff, stabs to the face. It is usually necessary to break ground before him for a time, and the man who hesitates to break ground where the occasion demands, simply and solely for the look of the thing, does not deserve to succeed.

In boxing, the feet are every whit as important as the hands. Use them. Get in and get out again, but be careful always if possible to land a telling stab every time you do get in. Remember how Freddie Welsh went in and kept going in to Willie Ritchie. Remember those straight lefts of his to Ritchie's body. There wasn't a knock-down blow in the whole battle, and I would not like to say that any of Fred's left digs were actually pile-drivers. But I do say that they were eminently useful. For they must have seriously impaired the American's wind, both by their force and by their frequent repetition.

Pretty nearly every man who cares to do so can develop a highly respectable left-hand dig. A good deal will of course depend on his natural gifts.

But it is by no means always the big hefty fellow who hits the hardest. Consider the little wisp of humanity named Jimmy Wilde. He is a mere atom, and save for his shoulders you would never imagine by looking at him that he could hit a dent in a pat of butter. And yet, look at the list of knock-outs.

It is true that Jimmy aquired, or rather developed the knack of forceful hitting by his practice with the pick in narrow coal seams. But he developed it far more by study and practice.

The vast majority of boxers weary themselves with appliances and special exercises in order to develop their hitting powers. Some swear by the sand-bag, others devote hours to swinging at a ball. Some try hand balances, ground exercises, or heavy wall machines, and thereby tighten up their muscles, losing speed in the process and incidentally hitting power itself. For big punches do not come from big muscles.

The next favoured method is that of weighting the gloves. Packey McFarland, for example, used shot-loaded gloves for ball and sand-bag punching and also for his shadow boxing, while the rest of us grip small dumb-bells when doing these exercises.

These weights help, of course, to a certain extent, but they are by no means actual developers of hitting power. The whole secret lies in accurate timing and in mental application. Make up your mind that you will hit as hard as you possibly can, with every ounce of your bodily strength, and above all with every fibre of your mental determination, and also that you will keep on hitting harder and harder as you progress, and you can then rest assured that your hitting powers will develop rapidly.

Remember that you must take up power from the ground through your legs and back. Sway all your muscles into your punches. Make them drives.

Push off from the ground. And, above all, get your timing and your aim right.

These two last you can best polish up by learning how to beat your sparring partners to the punch as described above. And, above all, hit straight.

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