

PUGILISM AS A FINE ART

ITS HAUNTS CHANGED FROM CELLARS TO PARLORS.

PROFESSORS OF BOXING STRIDING INTO FASHIONABLE SOCIETY—AN ACADEMY IN A BROWN-STONE MANSION—THE BAD EFFECT ON AMATEURS OF MR. SULLIVAN'S STYLE OF BOXING.

Professors of pugilism have recently found it easy to secure employment as trainers and teachers for merchants, bankers, lawyers, and others in the higher walks of life who desire to become proficient in the "manly art of self-defense," and who think that they require violent exercise in order to preserve their health. These strong-armed professors are fond of discussing among amateurs the necessity of becoming expert boxers in order to make the pathway of life a bed of roses. They delight in exhibiting their immense hands, and in declaring that they are able wherever they go to protect themselves with "nature's weapons." A few years ago sparring exhibitions were given in establishments of the lower order, and chief among the patrons were men who spent much of their time in prisons. Teachers of the art opened their academies in cellars or other out-of-the-way places, and the majority of their pupils were employes in the public markets, firemen, and Police officers. Occasionally a clerk, salesman, book-keeper, lawyer, or physician sought the seclusion of one of these academies and, without the knowledge of his friends and associates, undertook the study of scientific sparring. Scarred and weather-beaten pugilists put on the gloves with these students, and the latter were permitted to tire themselves in pounding the old ring masters. Of recent years a surprising change has taken place. Prominent representatives of the pugilistic community discovered through a series of glove-fights, which were arranged and conducted in mysterious ways, that a large portion of the world at large is at heart interested in pugilism. They found among those willing to pay from \$5 to \$20 to witness such encounters persons well known in political, business, and social circles in this City, and the professors at once began to assume airs of importance. Their society was courted by men who dine at Delmonico's and who are conspicuous in brilliant assemblages, and much anxiety was manifested by them concerning forthcoming events in the pugilistic world. The managers of such affairs were quick to learn that by creating an atmosphere of secrecy about them the exhibitions might be made very profitable and popular. When they caused it to be whispered in Wall and Broad streets and in the principal hotels that preparations for a desperate encounter between two well-known pugilists were being made, the interest was not lessened when it was also made known that the fighters were to wear hard gloves and pound each other according to the Marquis of Queensberry rules. The managers were eagerly sought, and tickets of admission were quickly secured. The pugilists and their advisers consulted in whispers, and they were afflicted with chills when Police officers suddenly brushed against them. Few of the entertainments were, however, disturbed by the officers.

The public appearance of Mr. John L. Sullivan, of Boston, as the champion of all the champions increased the interest in sparring. Under the able management of Mr. William Madden, who is now on a bridal tour in England, Mr. Sullivan soon obtained fame and fortune. Exhibitions were given in such vast structures as the American Institute Rink, in Third-avenue, and in the Madison-Square Garden, and thousands witnessed the illustrious Bostonian in all his strength and glory. Pugilistic entertainments were thus raised from the cellar and stable, and the actors themselves began to cut adrift from the butcher boys and stablemen who desired to accompany and admire them. They now hold their services as professors of sparring at fancy figures, and scout the notice that they must be classed with the lower strata of society. While in England it is a common thing to arrange a fight between experienced pugilists for very small sums of money, here it is insisted that thousands of dollars shall be staked. While in England pugilists yet rank no higher than bull-dogs in the estimation of the general public, here they threaten to become members of the Lotus, Union, Manhattan, and other fashionable clubs. A club man of considerable importance a few days ago offered a gentleman widely known in pugilistic circles \$100 if he would "set-to" with gloves with a newly discovered student of sparring, and the offer was indignantly declined. "I would not," said the pugilist, "spar for you for \$500 a minute. You have a very cheap idea of gentlemen engaged in my profession, and I would have you understand, Sir, that I am as well thought of in this community as you are." The pugilist of other years always appeared hungry and in an evil mood. His manners were vile and his costume irregular. Mr. Dooney Harris, a veteran warrior of the prize ring, used to voice the sentiments of his fellow-warriors when he said, "H'everybody h'asks you to drink, yer know, but nobody h'asks you to eat. Vy don't somebody trent us as vell as the dogs get treated?" Now the pugilist patronizes Fifth-avenue tailors and displays diamonds and jewelry. He greets men of wealth and social distinction with a hearty grasp of the hand and exchanges the compliments of the season with them. It is even said that pugilists are forming a liking for literature of the higher order, and, like gamblers, are beginning to discuss social and political problems with an earnestness that would put to flight members of the Liberal Club.

A reporter of THE TIMES yesterday met, in an up-town hotel, a young man who was the pink of politeness, who was faultlessly attired, and who talked like a law student. He has fought several terrific battles in the prize ring, and once served a term of imprisonment for thus violating the law. He is a teacher of sparring, and gives private lessons in the residences or places of business of merchants, brokers, and lawyers. He said that at first he strongly objected to visiting his pupils at their homes or offices, but he was welcomed in such a superb manner that he had not the heart to break his engagements with them. He told of many humorous incidents in his career as professor of sparring. A short time ago a broker, whose voice is frequently heard in the Stock Exchange, invited him to his office, saying that he desired to take a lesson. Seated in the office were several friends of the broker. The door was locked and gloves were produced. The spectators were very merry, and it was proposed that a referee should be appointed. The professor did not object. He saw that the brokers wanted amusement. Time was called, and the student furiously dashed at the professor. The latter soon discovered that he was actually engaged in a glove-fight of the most approved style. He had no inclination to injure the student, but was forced to knock him down in self-defense. The student did not rally, and his friends carried him to a sofa and permitted him to lie there and consider the matter. The professor apologized, saying that he was compelled to stop the student. The brokers were uproarious. They gave him several greenbacks of large denomination, and confided to him the fact that the student had been taking lessons from another professor and had been in training for weeks; that he had wagered a large sum of money that he could whip the professor who had just "knocked him out" and that they had won his money. The professor told the reporter that the majority of students of the present day at once adopt the style of Mr. Sullivan, of Boston, who knows nothing of scientific sparring. Mr. Sullivan, he continued, relies on his great strength to "knock out" his antagonist, and has not yet met a man stronger than himself. He is a rapid fighter and must do his work in a short space of time, as he "quickly loses his wind." The students, most of whom have watched Mr. Sullivan's conduct, fly at the professors after his manner, and the professors therefore find that they must do a great deal of downright hard work. Scientific sparring admits of many graceful movements, but Mr. Sullivan's style of fighting is known as "slugging." The professor said that in his visits to offices and residences he endeavored always to control his temper, but he restrained himself with much difficulty when violently thrown against an iron safe or into a fireplace. "Students get so excited," added the professor, "that it sometimes becomes necessary for me to severely rap them over the head or give them a punch in the pit of the stomach. Then they sit down or fall down and savagely complain of pains and aches. After giving several lessons during a day I find myself completely fagged out. Students won't spar in the old-fashioned easy way, taking time to study positions, but go in for a regular old battle, and thus I am nearly used up when it is time for me to return to my home."

Those who remember Mr. Charles Ottignon's place, in the basement of a Broadway building, where sparring was taught, will also remember that it was a first-class establishment of its kind and time, but in comparison with a first-class academy of the present time it would stand like a cheap Bowery variety theatre to the Grand Opera-house. A brown-stone mansion in East Twenty-second-street is fitted up as an "Academy of Physical Culture." The building, to all outward appearances, is a private residence like all the rest in the block. There are no gilt signs to show that it is an academy, and its existence is not advertised in the newspapers. It is patronized by men who are mainly used to club life, and each is supplied with a latch-key, so that he can gain admission without ringing the door-bell. Colored servants are in attendance, and the rooms are handsomely furnished. The front parlor is used as a reading and smoking room, and the patrons find an abundance of stationery if inclined to letter-writing. The walls are hung with handsome pictures. The middle parlor is used as a billiard-room, and the rear parlor is fitted up for sparring and wrestling bouts. All kinds of apparatus for the exercise and strengthening of the muscles of the body and limbs are there found, and a bath and rubbing room, presided over by a professional trainer is close at hand. The floor of the rear parlor is heavily padded and covered with expensive carpet. A handsome photograph of Mr. Joseph Coburn graces the wall. A side-board, on which may be found liquors and wines of the rarest kinds, is provided for the patrons of the academy. The upper rooms are furnished for card parties and sleeping-rooms, and the academy is flourishing. The students are happy, and the President, William Muldoon, the famous Græco-Roman wrestler, presides with grace and dignity over the institution. One of the principal professors is Mr. Michael Donovan, who is known throughout the country as a scientific sparrer and a desperate fighter in the prize ring. When the reporter was admitted within the walls of the academy he met Mr. Donovan in the front parlor deeply interested in Mr. Richard A. Proctor's article on "The Influence of Food on Civilization," in the *North American Review*. Mr.

Donovan said that after 16 years' experience as a pugilist he was becoming tired of that kind of life. He was proud of the fact that the art has been re-created, as it were, and had been raised to almost an æsthetic level. He agreed with his friend Mr. Oscar Wilde that the time had come when art in all its purity should be recognized by all classes of human kind. He was willing to aid in placing pugilism before the world in its proper light, and takes a deep and heartfelt interest in his pupils. He regretted to behold a tendency upon the part of a majority of the students to indulge in "slugging." The practice, he said, was simply abominable.

"I am weary to-night," added Mr. Donovan, "because of the activity of such pupils. I intended to see Mrs. Langtry at Wallack's, but I am tired and sleepy, and shall not attend the performance. I am making strenuous efforts to teach my pupils the folly of 'slugging,' but they come at me as though they were boiler-makers at work." At this moment a handsome colored servant entered the room and invited the reporter into the rear parlor. There Mr. Muldoon, in full ring costume, which is, however, not very much costume, being merely knee-breeches, long stockings, and shoes, was sparring with a pupil who bore a strong resemblance to Mr. Sullivan. The pupil is a banker. He wore ring costume like Mr. Muldoon, and was as quick as a cat. Mr. Muldoon is famous as a wrestler, and only recently showed much ability as a boxer. His wonderful strength is sufficient to stop the "sluggers." Mr. Donovan was much pleased with Mr. Muldoon's movements, and said that he would become a great sparrer. Mr. Muldoon teaches wrestling as well as boxing, and Mr. Donovan and others assist him. He gives lessons in sparring and wrestling at all hours of the day, and finds that the roll of the academy is gradually being lengthened. Among his visitors are wealthy men, who call in their own conveniences, and who seem to find much enjoyment in arraying themselves like prize-fighters or accomplished wrestlers against him and the rest of the faculty.