

## THE RECENT PRIZE FIGHT

I have always been fond of boxing, and have always believed in it as a vigorous, manly pastime, one of those pastimes which have a distinct moral and physical value, because they encourage such essential virtues as courage, hardihood, endurance, and self-control. Until within a few years, I used to box a good deal myself, and when I was young several times took part in contests of a public or semi-public nature—generally, I am bound to say, with ill success. I think boxing is a sport which should be encouraged among boys and young men generally. I have been glad to help it so far as I could in the army and navy, where, I believe, it has been an excellent thing for the enlisted men. When I was Police Commissioner, I was much struck by a statement made to me by Jacob Riis to the effect that the establishment of boxing clubs in many of the poorer districts had resulted in good, in rather unexpected ways; that is, it had not only given the vigorous young fellows who otherwise would join "gangs" a legitimate outlet for their activities, but had also markedly reduced the number of affrays in which the knife was used. The spirit produced by the boxing had told against knife-fighting, and distinctly discouraged unfair play.

Therefore, from every standpoint, I believe in the encouragement of boxing as a sport. Moreover, boxing as a profession has its good side also. Among the men whose friendship and regard I have really valued I could name a number of professional boxers, including several ring champions. The men to whom I refer I found square, decent men, who showed themselves good citizens when their good citizenship was tested. I approved of the movement which in this State, at the time that I was Police Commissioner, resulted in the enactment of a law permitting contests between professional boxers, under conditions which were meant to safeguard the sport against brutality and

the other evils which have everywhere resulted sooner or later in the suppression of the prize-ring. I saw several of these public boxing contests, in which the intent of the law was carried out in good faith.

Nevertheless, even under this law, abuses crept in, and, finally, one or two fights occurred where the surrounding circumstances were so scandalous that when I was Governor I was obliged to advocate, and finally to secure, the repeal of the law under which the contests took place, feeling convinced, together with the great majority of the citizens of the State, that under it almost all that made prize fighting objectionable and demoralizing had gradually been revived.

Now this was my experience, the experience of a man who, so far from being prejudiced against boxing, was and is a warm advocate of it, and who, at the outset, had not the slightest prejudice against professional boxing—that is, boxing for purses of money—and who has numbered among his friends many men who were professionals and had fought for money prizes. I am sure that what has happened in New York will happen in the Nation at large, and that prize fighting will be, as it ought to be, stopped in every State of the Union. Since it was stopped in New York the conditions surrounding the ring have grown worse, and not better. The money prizes fought for are enormous, and are a potent source of demoralization in themselves, while they are often so arranged as either to be a premium on crookedness or else to reward nearly as amply the man who fails as the man who succeeds. The betting and gambling upon the result are thoroughly unhealthy, and the moving-picture part of the proceedings has introduced a new method of money-getting and of demoralization. In addition, the last contest provoked a very unfortunate display of race antagonism. I sincerely trust that public sentiment will be so aroused, and will make itself felt so effectively, as to guarantee that this is the last prize fight to take place in the United States; and it would be an admirable thing if some method could be devised to stop the exhibition of the moving pictures taken thereof.

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