

MY STORY OF MY LIFE



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CHAPTER XIII.

HOW BOB FITZSIMMONS WAS TRICKED INTO FIGHTING ME.

AFTER half a year at home, with a lot of good hunting, I began to feel like taking on another fight. But I didn't care to look for little ones. I felt near enough to the top of my class to want a fight for the championship. Things were going along this way in the spring of '09 when all of a sudden we heard from Billy Brady in New York.

Brady had been out of ring affairs for a long time and busy with theatrical stunts, as he told me afterward, when one day a gentleman came into his office with a proposition. He wanted



RYAN CRACKED DUNKHORST ON THE NOSE.

ed Brady to go into the Coney Island Athletic club and take charge of all its affairs. Brady didn't care much for the scheme at first. He wanted to be known as a theatrical man and not as a promoter. Anyway, boxing had been dead in New York for some time, and there had been few good matches.

But the game came up again in great shape, and people began clamoring for the champions. Brady was sitting in a cafe one day talking the situation over, and as he talked he got enthusiastic.

"I have a great chance here," he said. "I know a big fellow out west who can whip Fitzsimmons and take the world's championship. He's fought here in the east, but he didn't make much of an impression. People don't know him the way I do. The time is ripe to spring him, and I've got a good mind to take a flier in fighting again."

"Why don't you?" asked the party on the other side of the table.

"By George, I will!" exclaimed Billy Brady.

He did. He took charge of the Coney Island A. C. and wired Billy Delaney to see me and get me to come east again. In a few days we were on the way.

When I was actually in New York Brady began planning a way to get Fitzsimmons to fight me.

"You can beat Fitz," Billy told me. "I know very well I can," I said.

"Then it's Fitz we've got to get for you," said Billy.

Brady knew in a general way that Fitzsimmons was either nearly flat broke or that he had all of his ring earnings tied up in some way. Being in the theatrical business, he knew a lot of inside things about various people. He heard somewhere or other that Fitzsimmons, after a stage tour just finished, had failed to pay the printers' bill for his theatrical posters. The bill was something around \$400 or \$500, and the printers had been unable to collect.

Brady, who was a customer, too, dropped into the printing company's office in an incidental sort of way and in the course of conversation said: "I hear you have some trouble getting money from Fitzsimmons. I suppose he's a little short just now. He hasn't fought for a long time."

The printers acknowledged that Fitzsimmons didn't appear to be rolling in ready wealth.

"Well," said Billy, "that could be fixed up easily enough. Next time you call on Fitz with the bill why don't you suggest that he take on some dub for an easy fight and get a few thousand dollars? He hasn't been in the ring since he won the championship at Carson two years ago, and the people are crazy to see him again."

Here Brady stopped and thought awhile. Then he jumped out of his chair as if he had a sudden idea.

"Why, say," he said, "I'll give him a fight at my club down at Coney Island and pay him good money for it. He can take on this big clumsy guy, Jeffries, that I've just brought on from California. He can beat Jeffries without any trouble. It'll be easy money."

"I'll mention it to him," said the printer, getting interested. "It sounds good, and I'd like to see Fitz in action again myself."

Brady did another thinking stunt. "The preliminaries won't need to

cost much when we've got a champion like Fitzsimmons for a headliner," he went on, "and I won't have to give that big stiff Jeffries more than a few dollars. As soon as the fight is over I can send him back to the coast and get rid of him, so I'll save money that way too. I figure that I can give Fitz 65 per cent of the receipts, win, lose or draw, and still make enough to cover all expenses and have a fair profit left over. Tell him that he can have 65 per cent, and we'll draw the biggest house on record."

Brady had struck the right scheme. Fitzsimmons listened and agreed to fight.

So we got Fitzsimmons, and at last the thing I'd been dreaming about ever since that day when I walked down the street with Charlie White at Carson had come true. I had my chance to fight for the championship of the world, and I made up my mind right then that I'd either win it or they'd carry me out of the ring on a shutter. I didn't intend to take the trouble to provide the shutter either.

Now that I was really matched work started in earnest. We got a cottage at Allenhurst, N. J., not far from the beach at Asbury Park.

Back of our cottage we had a handball court built. It was like the handball court Corbett had at Carson except for the fact that it wasn't roofed over. The weather was fairly warm now, and I like to work as much as possible in the open air. Beside the cottage there was a croquet court. Croquet may be a ladies' game, but nobody would have thought so if they'd seen Tommy Ryan and big Ed Dunkhorst, the "human freight car," at it. Then it was more like football. Tommy had a little on Ed. They used to bet a quarter a game. One day I was acting as referee, and Tommy had won about a dollar and a quarter from Dunkhorst. Ed had only two bits left, and he was sore. Tommy just touched the ball with his mallet before making a shot and moved it an inch or so. Dunkhorst jumped in and claimed a foul. As referee I decided that there was no foul. Dunkhorst started to holler, and Ryan turned on him.

"You big quitter!" yelled Ryan, and he reached over with his mallet and cracked Dunkhorst on the nose. The blood flew all over the front of his shirt. That broke up the game.

My training staff at that time consisted of Billy Delaney, my special adviser, and Ryan and my brother Jack and Ed Dunkhorst. Ryan was middle-weight champion. Jack weighed well above 200 and was game and clever. Dunkhorst was like an elephant. He weighed over 300. He was covered with layers of fat that made him like a punching mattress.

When I boxed with Ryan it was a pure fight. Ryan was supposed to be in the camp to give me the benefit of his skill, for he was one of the greatest boxers in the world and full of tricks. But I'll say right here that during the whole time I trained at Allenhurst Ryan didn't show me a single trick. He surely didn't invent the "crouch" for me, as most of the papers said at that time, for I used that crouch in my first fight and in every fight afterward whenever I needed it. Ryan didn't want to show me anything. His whole idea was all Ryan, Ryan, Ryan. He seemed to hate me for being so big and strong. He was envious, for if he'd had my physique with his skill he'd have been heavyweight champion as long as he cared to keep on fighting, and nobody would ever have come near him as a fighter.

One funny thing happened at our camp that I nearly forgot. Next door there were several of those imported English fighters training. I had several cases of good Bass ale shipped down to the cottage when training began and stored it away in the cellar. Every day I went down and got what we wanted for our dinner. After awhile it seemed to me that ale was going mighty fast. I began to keep track of it. I looked the staff over, and they were all nice and thin except Dunkhorst, who seemed growing fatter and fatter in spite of the hard work. Said I to myself, "That big stiff Dunkhorst is stealing my ale." So I thought I'd teach Dunkhorst a lesson.

That night I went to my room at 9 o'clock, waited until all was quiet and then sneaked down and hid myself near the cellar door. Nothing stirred for a couple of hours, and I was just about to give it up when I heard a sound at the cottage across the way, and in a few minutes one of the little Englishmen came creeping across our lawn to our cellar door. He opened the door slowly and sneaked in. A moment later he came out again with his arms full of my bottles of Bass.

I jumped on him like a cat. But I didn't hurt him—just took the ale away and told him I'd kill the next Englishman I saw around the place and let him go. There wasn't any more ale at the English quarters. Next day at dinner I gave big Dunkhorst two bottles for himself to ease my conscience. But I didn't tell Ed.



HE CAME OUT WITH HIS ARMS FULL OF MY BOTTLES OF BASS.

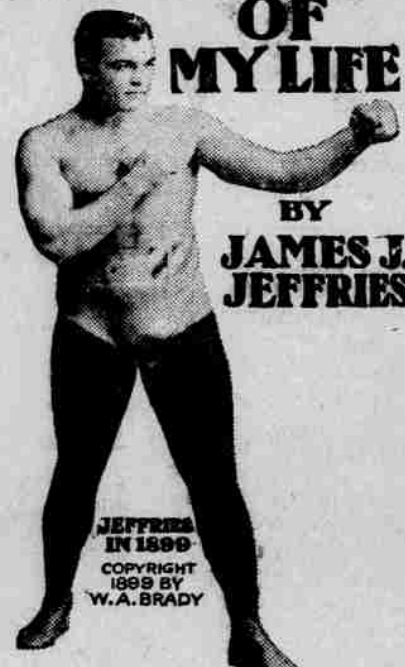
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BY JAMES J. JEFFRIES

JEFFRIES IN 1896
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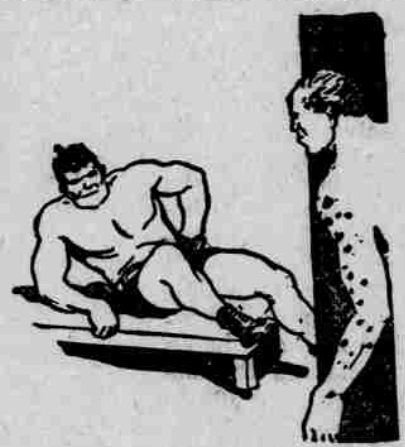
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CHAPTER XIV.

READY FOR THE FIGHT AND WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DRESSING ROOM.

I DIDN'T do much work the day before the fight, for I was ready and fit and only needed a day's rest.

I never ran my weight down so low while training for any other fight. When I came east to meet Armstrong I weighed just 245 pounds stripped to fighting tugs in the ring. Now, ready to meet Fitzsimmons, I scaled exactly 204 pounds. I had run myself to a shadow. Two days before the fight I weighed just 206 pounds stripped and let everybody around camp see me



I STRETCHED OUT ON A COT.

on the scales. The day before the fight I went with a number of reporters to the baggage room at the railroad station. There, on the baggage scales, in jumpers and a light sweater, I weighed an even 210 pounds.

I never attempted to make such low weight again, as I know I'm stronger and have more endurance when I carry forty pounds more flesh on my bones.

On the way up to New York I went sound asleep on the train and slept an hour. In New York we all had lunch and then went to Proctor's and saw a vaudeville show. After the show we went to Coney Island by train.

Fitzsimmons was a great favorite, of course. Few people knew anything about me. I was a stranger. At Ben Cohen's hotel—a great gathering place for sporting men—the most famous sports in America had gathered.

In the beginning Fitzsimmons was a 3 to 1 favorite, but as the talk about his great fights grew his friends began offering more and more. Before we were in the ring the betting was 3½ to 1 on Fitz, and some put up 4 to 1.

I heard all about the odds, but that didn't worry me at all. I felt absolutely sure that I'd win. Of course I knew that Fitzsimmons was a great fighter and that he knew more about boxing in a minute than I did in an hour. But I had it all figured out. I hadn't the slightest fear that he'd knock me out. The only thing that bothered me was the idea that he might be able to close both of my eyes and that in that case it would be hard to find him. But all the time I expected to get him in the end.

When we reached the Coney Island A. C. there was a feeling of nervousness in our little party. Brady and Delaney thought I was on edge, and perhaps I was—a little. It was a pretty big occasion. In a couple of hours I was going to either have my head knocked off or beat the world's champion and put myself in line for a whole lot of fame and a big bunch of money. It was either to the top or back to the hills for me, and nobody knew it better than I did.

Still, if I was nervous I didn't feel it, and I thought the boot was on the other foot. I thought Brady and Delaney were about ten times as nervous as I was. They weren't in training like myself, and they hadn't lived out of doors in the hills. They were to win or lose a pile of money on what I did in the ring, and they could only stay on the outside and watch me.

But as I heard it afterward Billy Brady took Delaney off to one side and said something like this:

"Bill, we've got to keep the big fellow from getting too nervous while he's waiting. We must get him away from here and keep him where he won't do too much thinking. I've got a scheme. I want to talk it over, and when he gets it in his head he'll be more confident."

So Brady and Delaney came back to me and said, "Jeff, let's go out of here and take a quiet walk to kill time." We started. It was a cold night. We

walked slowly along Coney Island boulevard away from the crowds, keeping in the shade of the trees, where nobody could recognize us. And on the way Billy Brady unfolded his plan.

"Jim," he said, "we don't know what tricks these fellows may have up their sleeves, and we might as well spring something first and get them guessing. I have a corking scheme. We can pull it off easy, and it's a winner."

"It's all right, Jim," put in Delaney. "Safe winner," said Brady, slapping me on the back.

"Well," I said, "what is it?" Billy looked around to make sure nobody was within hearing.

"Jim," he went on, "confidence is the thing that makes a champion. As soon as any fighter loses confidence he's a whipped man. Now, I know you've got it," slapping me on the back again, "but so has Fitzsimmons. We've got to shake his confidence, and the rest will be like taking candy from a baby. Now, here's the idea. Fitzsimmons has never seen you stripped, or he hasn't seen you for a long time. He doesn't realize what he's up against. He thinks he's going to fight a half baked dub who'll be scared to death the moment Fitz puts up his hands. See?"

"You've got to shake his confidence just a few minutes before the fight. It's got to be a sudden shock to upset a man like Fitzsimmons. You must show him your size first and your strength and then let him see that you don't care a snap of your finger whether he's Fitzsimmons or some bum preliminary scrapper."

"Now, here's the way you're going to do it. When you are stripped to go into the ring and waiting for the call you stretch out on the cot just opposite the door in your dressing room. Sprawl yourself out to look as big as you can. Fitz's dressing room is only a few steps away. I'll go to his door and call Martin Julian out. I'll get into a discussion with Julian over the rules. We can't agree, and I'll say, 'Damn it, get Fitz and come into Jeff's room here and let Fitz settle it himself.' Fitz will be inside his door listening on the quiet to hear what I'm asking for. He's a foxy fellow, and it'll strike him all of a sudden that this will be a good chance to let you see him and scare you before you get into the ring. He'll jump right out and come with us. The minute he pops into your door his eyes fall on you and he gets a good look at the size of you. That's his first shock. You just glance at him as if you didn't take any interest in Fitzsimmons at all. At the same time I'll begin to claw at Fitz and argue about the rules for all I'm worth. You jump up from your cot, grab me by the collar, throw me on my head in the corner with a jerk of your hand and growl at Fitz. 'Well, how do you want to fight?' Then put your hand on his shoulder as roughly as you can and slam him up against the wall."

We went back to the club. It all came off exactly the way Billy Brady planned it. I stretched out on the cot. Brady went out, and in a minute he came back with Julian and Fitzsimmons. I glanced at Fitz as if I didn't know who he was and wondered why he was butting in. Brady got in front of Bob and began saying: "I want this thing settled before my man goes into the ring. I want to know whether it's to be clean breaks or hit in the breaks."

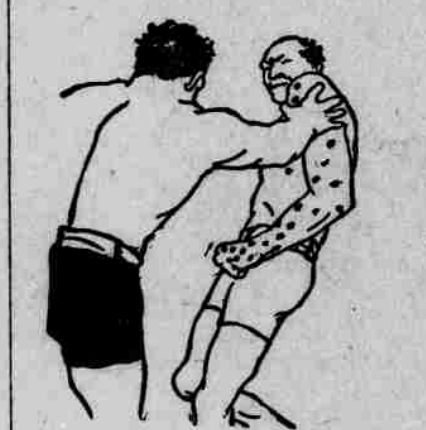
I almost had to laugh at the expression on Fitzsimmons' face as he looked over Brady's head at me.

But I jumped up as if I were dead sore. I grabbed Billy by the collar and jerked him toward the corner of the room so hard that he spun around two or three times and fell all over himself.

"You talk too much," I said.

"What've you got to say about it?" Then I turned to Fitzsimmons, and, looking as ugly as I could considering how much I wanted to laugh, I growled, "Well, how do you want to fight?"

At the same moment I gave him a shove and put all of my weight into it, so that he flew the whole length of the dressing room and nearly broke through the partition at the end. I could see Fitzsimmons' eyes pop out.



I GAVE FITZ A SHOVE.

Brady says that he had picked himself up by that time, and he almost had to laugh as he saw Fitzsimmons stare at me with his jaw dropped down in surprise.

That about ended the discussion. "Straight rules," said Fitz, and then he and Julian went out and back to their own room.

It was all right to talk about having Fitzsimmons beaten before the fight began. But if any other beaten man can fight the way Fitz did that night may I meet few of them. I believe that little act in the dressing room shook his confidence and that he knew he was up against the hardest proposition of his life, even up against defeat. But for all that he fought like a cornered wildcat. He was the gamest man in the world, old Fitz was.

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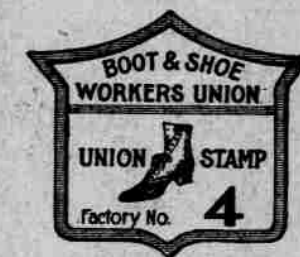
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