

# MY STORY OF MY LIFE



Joe Joffe

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## CHAPTER III.

I BECAME AN IRONWORKER AND BEK THE HARDEST JOBS.

I QUIT school when I was fourteen years old and went to the Los Angeles Business college for a year. But that was too light work to suit me. I wanted to do something that would take strength. So I went to work as an apprentice for ironworkers, to learn the trade.

Here my strength came in very good. I mastered the work in no time, and in five months I could handle anything that any man in the shop could work on, so that I was earning, piece-work, from \$5 to \$12 a day, as much as any man there, except the boss.

Now, in my seventeenth year I stood six feet or over and weighed fully 220 pounds. The boss had a saying that any man who worked in iron should



I'D ASK THE BOSS TO GIVE ME THE HARDEST WORK HE HAD.

scale at least 200, and my size took his eye. Whenever a job required unusual strength I was picked out for it.

Where a lot of men work together there is always more or less rivalry. We had our wrestling bouts and roughed around a little at noon and when the day's work was over. When I first began working I thought several of the men were as strong as Hercules, but by this time I could more than hold my own with them.

I didn't care to make much of a boast of my strength, and I don't now. It was natural for me to be strong, and I suppose I'd have been a strong man even if I hadn't worked so hard. It was in me. I credited it all to my out of door life and thought that when other men as big as myself lacked the same quality of strength and quickness it was because they hadn't grown up out where the sun would sink into their bones and muscles and the mountain air expand their lungs.

Later, when I was champion, doctors examined me wherever I went and told me that I had "a marvelous reserve of nerve force," which, it seems to me, was just a way of stringing words together to explain something they didn't understand any more than I understand it myself.

One thing is certain. I did have a peculiar kind of strength that came to me only in an emergency. I had two kinds of strength. At ordinary times I was a strong man—stronger for a steady lift or a hard effort of any kind than any of the other men I worked with. But on a few occasions came a different kind of strength coupled with quickness that always amazed me when I sat down afterward to think it over and study out a reason that would satisfy my curiosity. In the course of my fighting career I have met many strong men who rose to the top of their profession by whipping scores of others only a little less able. To the best of my recollection Bob Fitzsimmons was the only one who had this knack or trick I speak of highly developed. Fitzsimmons was a lanky fellow with thin legs and a thin body, but I found when I fought him that when he was almost out he could draw on some hidden reserve of strength and for a few minutes fight with double his ordinary force. Fitzsimmons was a trained fighting man, a veteran, at that time, and of course he may have developed this. But to me it was entirely natural.

When I have been badly battered in a fight it hasn't worried me at all, because I know I am in no danger. When it comes to a showdown I always have that spurt, drawn from some reserve force I don't understand. It has come to me in a way two or three times, although, to tell you the absolute truth, I've never really needed it in the ring, for I've never yet been dazed by a blow or arm weary from fighting.

The first time that this unexplained power ever came suddenly to me was before I took up fighting at all and when I was still working in iron. The company sent a big gang of men out

to the Panta oil wells to build oil tanks. That's a man's work, and youngsters aren't needed on the job. But I could do a man's work, and I liked the rough life in the hills.

Building an oil tank is no play. First the structural ironwork goes up, and then the big iron plates are raised into place and riveted one to another to build the sides. Each sheet of iron, like the steel plates on the side of a battleship, is rolled into shape in the works before it is shipped. When you remember that each plate weighs from 800 to 900 pounds and that it has to be fitted so that every rivet slides into its hole like your foot into a tight shoe you can see that putting up an oil tank isn't schoolboy's play.

At the tank I was working on that day we had a big derrick to lift the plates into position. It was made up of a mast 90 feet long and 12 by 12 inches square, supporting a boom of just the same size. The mast was held erect by long guy ropes of twisted steel wire fastened to long iron pegs driven into the ground.

Most of the men were working around the mast and boom, but I was on a staging on the other side heading rivets. I had just finished one and straightened up for a moment waiting for another redhot rivet to be placed. I saw one of the long iron pegs holding the guy ropes of the derrick pull out of the sand with a jerk and go whirling high in the air, the wire guy rope twisting and squirming like a snake. Instantly I knew that the mast and boom were falling. There was no time to run to the ladder. I leaped down to the ground, went to my knees, jumped up like a flash and ran around the tank. As I ran I heard the crash of timbers and the grinding of iron and felt the shock of a heavy concussion. On the other side it took only a glance to see what had happened. The great mast and boom, folded together, had fallen straight over on the half completed tank. The men were standing stock still, staring up at the wreckage. My eyes followed theirs, and then for about a tenth of a second I felt sick. There on the scaffolding right over my head lay one of the workmen pinned under the heavy mast and boom—a friend of mine. His name was Kelly. He was bent halfway across an iron plate that had been raised nearly to its position. His head and shoulders and body were on the side toward me.

Everybody, as I said, was stock still and staring. But I didn't even think. I don't know to this day how I ever moved so quickly. The next thing I remember I was at the top of the ladder and stepping on the platform. There was the man pinned under the timbers. In another instant I had my shoulders under them and was straining for the heave. They came up slowly as I straightened my back and legs, up and clear, and then with a final effort I threw them out and sideways to fall crashing on the ground. I fairly tossed them away from me.

Kelly's body slid from the edge of the iron plate and dropped to the ground. As I came down slowly the men gathered around to look at him. They rolled him over to see how near cut in two he was, and to their surprise he groaned. We poured water on him, and after awhile he sat up. It was one of the queerest things that ever happened. He was hurt more by the fall to the ground than by the timbers dropping on him. The tumble nearly broke his neck, while the timbers only squeezed him a little. When the mast fell Kelly was leaning across the edge of the iron plate, looking down. The timbers came right across his back, but just as they reached him



WE ROUGHED AROUND A LITTLE AT NOON.

they lodged against the framework of the tank and stopped short. If they had gone a few inches more my friend Kelly would have been cut in two.

As soon as I saw he was still alive I called four of the men to help me slide the timbers along the ground and get them into position to be up ended again.

A tank builder leads a rough life and hasn't much time to waste on sentiment. Kelly wasn't killed, and the work was lagging.

To my surprise, five of us couldn't budge the timbers. It took eight men, myself included, to move them one at a time, and as far as effort is concerned I'm sure I lifted with as much good will as when I tossed them both off of Kelly single handed. Eight of us did shift them around, and soon they were up again, securely guyed this time, and the work went on.

Mr. Smalley, our boss, was quiet for awhile. Then he took hold of my arm and said: "Well, Jim, you're a pretty husky boy. I've known some strong men in my time, but none that could do what you did. Some of them were as big as you, so it isn't just the muscle. Where do you get it?"

I didn't know, so I didn't answer.

## CHAPTER IV.

I JUST HAPPENED TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER.

I JUST happened to become a fighter. That's the only way to explain it. There had always been some sort of an idea back in my mind that I'd like to be a champion. I guess every boy has that notion. But I hadn't followed the idea up. Working and hunting took all of my time now. There was a welter-weight fighter named Billy Gallagher at the works. He was a good one in his day—a good clever fighter. Billy was always after me. He said I had the making of a great heavyweight and that I could get a pile of easy money for fighting instead of pulling down a few dollars a day by hard work. Billy was enthusiastic over it, but I myself couldn't see where fighting in a ring could touch hunting deer or mountain lions as a sporting proposition, and I didn't seem to care much for getting money by punching other people on the nose. I guess I was too good natured, and, for that matter, I never have gone into a fight with much spite toward the other man. Some of my best friends today are the men who have fought me in the ring and been knocked out.

One night a heavyweight fighter who lived in Los Angeles, a big, lanky negro named Hank Griffin, wandered into a saloon where some of the boys spent their evenings when the day's work was over. He leaned on the bar and began to talk about fighting, as all these fellows do. Griffin was a very good man in those days and had fought and beaten a lot of big fellows all



AS I RAN IN I BEGAN PULLING OFF MY COAT.

through the west. Our fellows knew his reputation, but when he began to boast they didn't like it, and when he threw a handful of gold twenties on the bar and said he'd back himself to knock out any man in the town they got together in a corner and talked it over. They decided that young Jeffries was about the only man within reach equal to the negro in size and strength. In a few minutes they sent a man running to my house to call me out to fight.

It didn't take long to explain things in about a minute I was tearing back with them. As I ran in through the door I began pulling my coat off, ready to fight him there on the spot. But he explained that there was a slight misunderstanding. He didn't want to fight offhand like that. He meant that he could whip any man in town in a ring with gloves on his hands and with a referee. That was what he meant. He'd like to fight me that way and we might as well both make a little money out of it.

That was a new notion to me, but it sounded good. The boys offered to back me with a bet, which suited Griffin well enough, judging from the way he grinned. Gallagher wanted me to fight too. In short, we fixed up a match on the spot, and I went home and slept like a log until the alarm clock rang in the morning. There wasn't anything to worry over about the idea of fighting a professional. He didn't look so terrible, and besides that I never did credit negroes with much fighting ability and gameness.

Billy Gallagher wanted me to go into training for the fight, which was to be held in a hall in town. But I wouldn't do it. I went right along with my work and let Griffin go into training.

On the night of the fight I went straight home from work a little early and ate a good dinner. Then I walked down to the hall. The boys were there already, with a lot of other people that I never saw before. All the lights were lit, and in the middle of the hall a regulation boxing ring had been put up on an elevated platform.

We both got stripped for action without much delay. Before I went out to the ring they pulled the gloves over my hands and tied them on. I can remember just how funny boxing gloves felt to me. I never had a pair on before in my life. My hands felt so big and clumsy that I didn't know what to do with them.

We got into the ring. Griffin was a tall fellow, all sinewy muscles from head to heels. He wore a wide smile like a hungry man sitting down to a good dinner. But he didn't look very dangerous. I'd seen stronger and bigger men in the shops. The lights and the people interested me more than he did.

At last time was called, and we walked together and shook hands. Then I got the surprise of my life. Almost before I had my hands up he hit me an awful smash on the nose. You can talk about being hit on the chin or in the stomach or on the ear, but let me tell you that a blow on the nose hurts more than any of them. It makes your eyes fill and blur, and you

wonder if your nose is flat. A blow on the nose either makes a man want to stop fighting or it makes him mad. It made me mad. I forgot all about the boxing gloves on my hands for a moment and tore after that coon to break him in two. I went for him just the way I've seen the bulls rush at the matadors in the Mexican bull rings. That was just what Griffin wanted. He was a boxer, and I was a novice. A boxer can play with a novice, as a rule, and never take a chance. What that negro did to me during the next four or five rounds was a shame. He punched me all over the ring. He landed on my nose and my eyes and my chin as he pleased. He just wallowed away as fast as he could hit, and I surely did see stars. As for landing on him, I couldn't have hit him with a whip.

But after a few rounds I recovered from my surprise. I took stock and began to figure. Here was a man handling me in a way I'd never dreamed of. This must be the boxing skill that Gallagher had told me about. Griffin was hitting me where he pleased, but he couldn't either daze me or knock me down, and I wasn't tiring at all. The thing for me to do was to find out how he did it—to get the combination—and then pay him back in his own coin. And I felt sure that if I could ever land on him he'd drop.

I cooled off as I began to think. I stopped rushing at him in blind bull fashion. Griffin thought I was tiring, and he began coming to me instead. For awhile he peppered me as hard as he could, trying to put me down. As each blow started I studied out the way he delivered it. Now and then I tried one of his blows in return; but, as a rule, he either blocked or ducked cleverly or stepped aside a little bit and countered me on the chin. The way he could land on me made me feel foolish—it made me feel helpless. And yet all the time I knew that in the end I'd knock him out. I felt sure of that.

I was learning now in every round. In fact, I think more knowledge of the fighting game came to me that night than in a year's boxing that followed.

In eight or ten rounds the negro began to show signs of growing tired. He was wearing himself out trying to beat me down, and his blows didn't hurt. I could feel the difference now. There didn't seem to be the same weight and sting behind the punches when they landed on me. I began walking into him slowly without attempting to strike a blow, just holding my head forward, crouching a little, with my right hand up near my chin and the left stuck straight out in front. I learned that trick in my first fight, and afterward it won the championship of the world for me. Tommy Ryan never showed me that "crouch." It was my natural way of fighting.

Now that he was tiring the big negro baffled me by sticking his left hand into my face with light jabs, holding me off. I used my right hand nearly all the time, only jabbing at his head now and then with the left, for as he battered me I had learned something and had planned a way to win. I wanted to settle him with one sure punch. I've always liked to win my fights that way.

It was hard to get the opening I waited for. Griffin was still fast on his feet. His cleverness puzzled me. When I saw a chance it had passed before I could get into action.

In my corner after the thirteenth round my second said: "Jim, it's 11:30. The lights go out at 12. Go after him now or you'll lose your chance and he'll get the decision on points."

"I'll get him," I said.

We came up for the fourteenth. Griffin was weary, but unmarked. I was cut and bruised and battered, but just as strong and fresh as at the start. Moreover, I had begun that fight without any idea of what glove fighting in a ring meant, and by this time I had learned something. I began forcing my way in, walking steadily toward Griffin and making him back away as he jabbed at me. I straightened up a little and let him have a good opening for my chin. It was a chance for the right. Griffin, grinning a little, shot the right over I bobbed in enough to let the blow slip around my neck and jammed my left fist into his stomach. He just dropped in a heap and curled up like a leaf. The fight was over. The referee counted his ten; he could have counted a hundred. All the boys were slapping me on the back and telling me I was a wonder.

**Proof Against Wasp Stings.**

A Scottish naturalist in a paper on the habits of wasps tells how a black-bird will stand at the side of a hanging wasp's nest and deliberately tear it in pieces in order to get at the larvae, apparently undisturbed by the swarm of angry insects, whose vicious stings instantly put to flight the human curiosity seeker who ventures near to watch the demolition.

**Manchuria.**

Manchuria's area is slightly greater than that of the combined states of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska, or the total area devoted annually to corn, wheat, cotton, oats and barley in the United States.

**Industry.**

It is not enough to be industrious. So are the ants. What are you industrious about?—Thoreau.

**Evening Up.**

"Were you ever in a holiday?" "No, but I've taken part in a show-down."—New York Journal.

# AXTEL HEIGHTS SALE!

.....Choice Slightly Lots.....

**Easy Terms :: :: Bed Rock Prices**

Now on Sale on grounds, 17th and Van Dorn streets, 6 blocks South of 17th and South streets. These lots are only four blocks from some of the best homes in the city where lots are selling from \$1500 to \$1800. A high slightly spot overlooking the entire city and in direct line of development of the very best part of the same.

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# ARE YOU A HEN OR A DUCK?

A duck which stuck faithfully to business during the Summer and laid several dozens of large fawn-colored eggs, complained that she wasn't appreciated. "See that Hen over there?" said the Duck. "She hasn't laid as many eggs as I have, nor as big, but she has books written about her and verses composed in her honor, while nobody is saying a word about me."

"The trouble with you is," said the wise old Rooster standing near, "that you don't tell the public what you have done. You lay an egg and waddle off without saying a word, but that sister of mine never lays one without letting everyone in the neighborhood know about it. If you want to cut any ice in the community, you must learn to Advertise."

Get wise, Mr. Business Man, and do your cackling in  
**THE WAGEWORKER**  
1705 O Street Auto Phone 2748

## BOILERMAKERS STILL STICK.

The Burlington's Bluff, Didn't Start a Rivet in Strikers' Ranks.

The Burlington management has another guess coming. It guessed that if it issued notice that all strikers who failed to report for work before June 6 would be forever barred, it would be rushed by strikers anxious to get back. It didn't phase the strikers, for not a man went back.

"What's more, none of us are going back," said President Jonas in discussing the notice. "We are out to stay out unless our demands for simple justice are recognized."

The "scabs" continue to come in and go, and despite the most strenuous efforts the management can not keep a full sized force at work. As a result men in other department are being laid off at intervals, waiting for the boiler shop force to catch up. The strikers meet every day, and the benefits are paid with pleasing regularity. Nor is the international bearing all the burden. The local is giving a series of social functions and makes good money while enjoying pleasant hours with their many friends.

## THE ELECTRICAL WORKERS.

District Council Meeting at Cedar Rapids a Successful Affair.

O. M. Rudy was in Cedar Rapids last week, representing the Lincoln Electrical Workers in the district council convention held there. He reports the meeting a splendid success, and he can not say too much in praise of the entertainment put up by the local Electrical Workers, and the other unionists of that city. The mayor and city council took a big part in the entertainment, taking the delegates and visitors on an auto ride about town and giving them the freedom of the municipality. The volume of business transacted was large. The district jurisdiction was extended by taking in four other states heretofore controlled by the McNulty-Collins bunch of skates, and the whole situation cleared up in a highly satisfactory manner. General Secretary Murphy attended the meeting and told an interesting story of the progress made by the "Reids." A. L. Urick, president of the Iowa State Federation of Labor and "Reid" representative on the arbitration board, ex-

## plained in detail the progress of the work to date. The Cedar Rapids Tribune has this to say of Lincoln's delegate, Mr. Rudy:

"O. M. Rudy of Lincoln, Neb., told us of the methods adopted in raising \$20,000 to purchase the labor temple in that city. He is most enthusiastic in the advocacy of such affairs and gave good, logical reasons as to why they should be attempted in every city of twenty thousand and upwards."

W. L. Mayer of Lincoln, secretary-treasurer of the district council, also attended the meeting.

## SQUARED THE BALL TEAM.

Cincinnati Unionists Won By Sticking to Their Little Fight.

From the beginning of the American League season the union men of Cincinnati have had the boycott on the Cincinnati team because the management failed to play square with organized labor. The management tried to make it appear that the boycott was benefit, just as Jim VanCleave of the Buck outfit did. But the Cincinnati unionists called that bluff. Cincinnati unionists love baseball as much, perhaps, as the unionists of other cities, but they didn't love it well enough to sidetrack their unionism, and they put up a fight that won. Last Tuesday the Cincinnati management capitulated and signed an agreement that shows a signal victory for the unionists.

The agreement provides that all contracts for tearing down construction, or repairs of parks shall contain a clause requiring the employment of union labor exclusively and all printed matter shall bear the union label. All cigars and tobacco sold within the park must also bear the union label. Further, the agreement provides that on some Sunday during the season the Cleveland club must play an exhibition game with another American league club and the proceeds to be devoted to a charity to be designated by the Cleveland building trades council.

Cincinnati Typographical Union did not back up on its boycott, and as a result even the Cincinnati score cards will bear the label of the Allied Printing Trades hereafter.

Always on Tap.

While there's life there's hope.—Chicago Record-Herald.