

# CORBETT'S DEFEAT BY FITZSIMMONS

**HISTORY of the Carson City Fight, with Its Solar Plexus Knockout, Its Moving Pictures and Its Other Features That Combine to Make It One of the Most Amazing Contests on Record**

ARTICLES for a fight for the championship of the world between the title holder, James J. Corbett, and the middle weight champion, Robert Fitzsimmons, were signed a few days before Christmas, 1896. The promoter of this battle, which was fought in Carson City, Nev., was Dan Stuart of Texas, who had demonstrated his ability in affairs of this sort. Stuart was known the country over as a square man, who always was anxious to make good his word, and with him at the head of affairs the followers of pugilism rested in full confidence that the contest would be in every way above suspicion.

One of Stuart's close friends was a man who for more than 30 years had been interested in all classes of amateur and professional sport and who today is known the country over as one without a blemish upon his reputation. To this man Stuart went one day early in January, 1897, and asked him if he would undertake to place \$50,000 in wagers on the Corbett-Fitzsimmons battle, the money to be furnished by Stuart.

"That is too much money to bet on this fight, Dan," said his friend. "When two such men as Corbett and Fitzsimmons get into the ring either one is likely to be returned the winner. Fifty thousand dollars is a lot of money to risk on a contest of this kind."

"I will not risk the money," said Stuart, "unless I am able to make certain arrangements that I now have in contemplation."

"Fifty thousand dollars could not be bet," replied his friend, "without attracting much attention. I don't know what you mean, Dan, but, of course, the inference is bad. I never have had a shade the best of it, and I don't want the best of it. If I bet \$50,000 on this fight my friends would know it, and if anything went wrong I would be suspected of employing methods that I do not like. Then if your connection with the wagers were established—and I don't see how it would be possible to keep it secret—it would look very bad for all of us. I wish you would get somebody else to place your money."

Stuart replied that he knew of no other man who could place \$50,000 without attracting a lot of attention that would be harmful to the fight and distasteful to himself.

"Why don't you try Pittsburg Phil (George E. Smith)?" responded his friend.

"I had thought of him," said Stuart, "but I am not acquainted with him. Of course, he is just the man to place this money if he could be persuaded to do so."

"I will be very glad to see that you meet him," responded Stuart's friend. "If you will name the time and place I will bring you together."

This was agreed upon, and Dan Stuart and Pittsburg Phil were brought together. What arrangement was made between them can not now be told. Both men are dead, and what they knew of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons battle died with them.

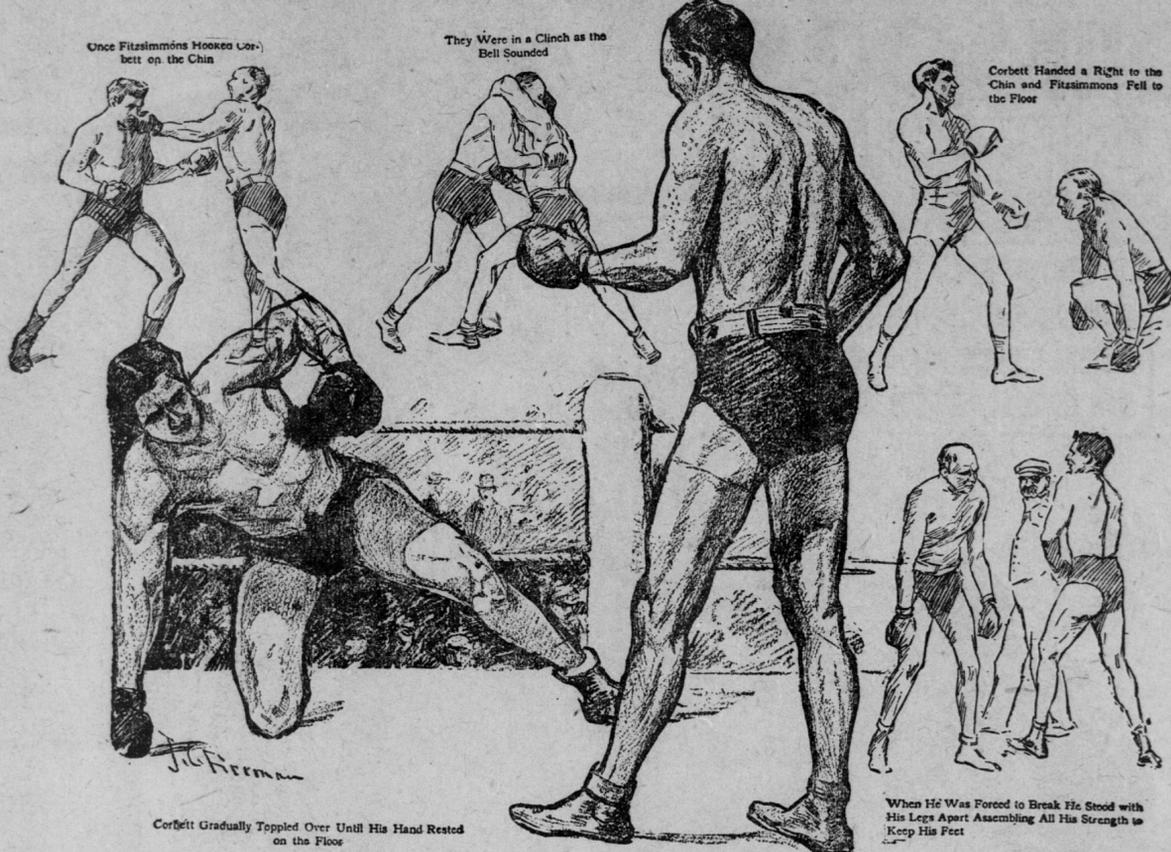
Pittsburg Phil was in San Francisco a few days before Corbett and Fitzsimmons came together. The city was in a tumult of excitement, and betting on the result of the fight was free. In the poolrooms, which then flourished in an open manner, Pittsburg Phil took the Fitzsimmons end of the wagers at 1 to 2. So much did he bet that the odds gradually shortened, until two days before the fight 7 to 5 was the longest price that Corbett's adherents would offer. Phil then went to Carson City, where he repeated the methods he had employed in San Francisco. In a poolroom owned and managed by Corbett's brother, Phil wagered a large fortune on the chances of Fitzsimmons, and again he forced the prices to shorten materially.

The first six rounds of the battle were all in favor of Corbett. The sixth round found Fitzsimmons apparently a beaten man. Not once, however, did Pittsburg Phil falter. At the ring side, even at the moment when Fitzsimmons seemed about to sink to the mat helpless, he stood covering every dollar of Corbett money that was offered. The friends of the champion knew that all he had to do was to continue forcing the fight and Fitzsimmons must fall before his onslaught. To their surprise Corbett betrayed bad judgment, and instead of going in to strike down his battered opponent he stood away and gave Fitzsimmons time to recuperate his strength.

There was in Carson City the last few days that preceded the battle a man who was and continued up to the time of Stuart's death a close personal friend and business agent of the fight promoter. This man believed Fitzsimmons had no chance to whip Corbett and wagered a large sum of money in accordance with his views. Two days before the battle he retreated from his position and bet so much money on Fitzsimmons that at the conclusion of the fight he was a heavy winner.

When Corbett went down to defeat in the fourteenth round he fell in such a manner as to take him almost out of focus of the picture making machine. Raising himself on his hands he twisted around so that he faced the lens. His face then took on an appearance of intense pain. Apparently he was unable to gain his feet during the count of 10. As the fatal word "Out!" was spoken Corbett sprang to his feet with as much strength as he had shown at any time during the fight and declared an intention of whipping all who were in the ring.

THERE had been bad blood between the heavy weight and middle weight champions for several years. More than one attempt to bring them together had failed. Corbett, it seemed, was more willing than was Fitzsimmons to test their relative merits. Finally, however, the two men agreed to fight to a finish under marquis of Queensberry rules for the heavy weight championship of the world and for a purse of \$15,000, all of which went to the winner. George Siler of Chicago was agreed upon as referee.



Stuart picked Carson City as the scene of the fight, Nevada having enacted legislation favorable to glove contests. Corbett established his quarters at Shaw's Springs, having in his camp various celebrities of the prize ring, among others James J. Jeffries, then known merely as a husky young boiler maker, but now as the one unbeaten champion of champions.

Fitzsimmons began training at Cook's Grove, his brother in law, Martin Julian, being in charge. Both pugilists during their period of training displayed freaks of temper and peculiarities that were beyond the power of their friends to understand. At all times Corbett was sullen, fretful and disagreeable. Fitzsimmons acted like a crazy man. He was frequently seen tramping bare footed through the snow. At times he would joke in a hysterical manner and at other times he would have moments of sullenness equal to those of Corbett.

Previous to his battles with Jackson, Sullivan and Mitchell, Corbett had been pleasant and confident of success. In Carson City he seemed to dread the approach of the day of the fight. That he was afraid of Fitzsimmons no one believed! It may have been that he was afraid of the battle. Finally, as the sun was mounting toward its zenith on March 17, the two men were brought together in the ring at the open air arena outside Carson City. There were the usual preliminaries and introductions. One feature of the battle that marked a precedent was the presence at the ring side of Mrs. Fitzsimmons, wife of Corbett's antagonist. When the men were called to the center of the ring to receive final instructions from the referee Corbett advanced and held out his hand to shake with Fitzsimmons. The offer was refused, Fitzsimmons backing away, shaking his head and muttering "No." Then the ring was cleared, the gong sounded, and the two gladiators began one of the most remarkable battles the prize ring has known.

Corbett, as in his preceding fights, was a picture of muscular strength and agility. He was trained to the hour, his flesh hard and white as marble. The only bad feature of his appearance was to be found in his face, which was drawn and rather heavily lined. He showed evidences of worry. Fitzsimmons, never an object of beauty, shambled about the ring on his thin legs, which knocked together at the knees and spread apart like the prongs of a bent hairpin. His large hands dangled from his long arms far below his thighs. A sneering smile did nothing to improve his facial beauty.

As their hands came up Fitzsimmons made his attack. The only effect was to enrage Corbett, so that the blood, forcing its way to his cheeks, gave to him an appearance of greater vitality.

Corbett maneuvered so as to keep Fitzsimmons with his face to the sun. The Cornishman assumed the aggressive and swung violently with his right and left. Corbett dodged and the two men came into their first clinch. They parted at a word from the referee, and Fitzsimmons took up his pace, following Corbett around the ring. Suddenly the champion halted, pushed his way forward and handed to Fitzsimmons a hard right and left to the head and ribs. Fitzsimmons countered with a left, then landed without force over Corbett's heart. All that could be said of the first round was that the two men were feeling each other out, Corbett using the greater caution and showing the better judgment.

### CORBETT SEEMS INVINCIBLE

Coming up for the second round Corbett immediately changed his tactics and demonstrated his willingness to exchange blows. He drew Fitzsimmons forward, brushed aside his left lead and then swung a heavy right blow to the temple and clinched. Fitzsimmons was angry. He endeavored to force Corbett away, and when they finally broke the Cornishman was in Corbett's corner, where he was kept for a full half minute by the champion, who landed half a dozen blows, none of which, however, was damaging.

Fitzsimmons finally fought his way out of this close corner, Corbett giving ground, but doing much the better work in the leads. Half a dozen times Corbett jabbed Fitzsimmons' head back with a light left. Suddenly he shifted his methods, dropped his shoulders and shot a heavy left to his opponent's stomach. Fitzsimmons, hurt, tried to clinch. Corbett pushed him off, repeated his tactics and drove a second hard left hand blow to Fitzsimmons' stomach. Again Fitzsimmons fell into a clinch, and they were swaying together when the bell rang.

They met in the third round in the center of the ring. Corbett, standing straight, stepped in close and swung a damaging left to the stomach. Fitzsimmons drove his left for Corbett's head, but the blow was

ducked and they came to a clinch, Corbett showing that he possessed the greater strength, pushing Fitzsimmons about with ease. Nevertheless, the Cornishman was willing to force matters, and he drove the champion back to the ropes, taking in payment a hard left hand blow to the face. Immediately after that Corbett came back with his right and caught Fitzsimmons under the jaw, and as the Cornishman raised his guard Corbett sent a hard left to the body.

Fitzsimmons was eager to clinch, and as they came together gave Corbett a short arm jolt to the head. No damage was done and Corbett more than evened matters up by letting his right fall heavily on his opponent's kidneys. The body blows were distressing Fitzsimmons, a fact that did not escape Corbett's attention. He started in to demonstrate his superiority over his opponent, and he had little difficulty in accomplishing his object. Corbett exchanged rights to the ribs and then sent two hard punches under the heart, getting away without a return. The round belonged to Corbett beyond doubt. Those who predicted his victory were confident he could not be defeated.

Corbett took up his victorious march again in the fourth, which Fitzsimmons opened with an attempt to take the lead. He forced Corbett for a few seconds and received a smashing left in the face for his pains. There was a clinch and Fitzsimmons goaded Corbett in the ribs, to which the champion responded with a light right to the jaw. Fitzsimmons smiled, but backed away, Corbett following rapidly after him. Corbett danced in and out and snapped a hard left to the chin. Fitzsimmons was angry and swung wild, falling out of position. Corbett took quick advantage and landed the heaviest blow of the fight up to this time on Fitzsimmons' right ear. It was a distressing blow and Fitzsimmons did not steady himself for several seconds. Then he led with his left and clinched.

Corbett was the master of the situation, and as he forced his opponent away he jolted one of his eyes with his right. Fitzsimmons made no attempt to conceal his distress. He rushed into a clinch and endeavored to best his opponent at infighting. But at this he found Corbett right at home with a knowledge of wrestling that was surprising.

### PLAYING WITH LANKY BOB

Corbett was playing with Fitzsimmons much as a cat plays with a mouse, and as they broke away he rapped his opponent with a hard right to the heart and, immediately stepping forward, whipped his right into the ribs with all his force. Swinging Fitzsimmons half around he drove his left to the jaw and, working his arms like piston rods, repeated the blow. Fitzsimmons staggered as he went back to his corner, while Corbett showed absolutely no sign of distress. Julian and his other seconds worked hard over Fitzsimmons during the minute's intermission and sent him out for the fifth round somewhat refreshed. Fitzsimmons rushed and ran into a left jolt to the chin that caused him to clinch. Corbett drove a heavy right to the region of the heart and Fitzsimmons' arms fell to his side. A second blow to Fitzsimmons' body seemed to wake him up and he landed a heart punch that failed to do much damage.

The best that could be said of Fitzsimmons was that he took his punishment with great gameness. At every point of the game Corbett was demonstrating his superiority. In the clinches with his forearm against his opponent's throat he forced his head back, and then as soon as free, drove his fists through to the body or to the face. Fitzsimmons was bleeding freely, a fact that caused the spectators to clamor for a knockout. Twice Corbett jabbed Fitzsimmons on the nose with his left and the Cornishman was almost ready to take his final nap. Then came a sharp admonition from Corbett's corner. Delaney, grasping one of the ropes of the ring, leaned with his head forward toward the two contestants.

"Jim, Jim," he shouted, "take your time! Don't let him fool you!"

This cry from his corner for a moment seemed to anger Corbett. He stepped back, looked at Delaney, and then rushed forward and in quick succession landed two lefts and a right, jarring Fitzsimmons from the top of his head to his feet. Fitzsimmons, attempting to drive in a punch to the heart, fell into a clinch. His eyes were half dazed and he was so distressed that his breath was hissing through his teeth.

Mrs. Fitzsimmons had sprung to her feet and was shouting instructions to the men who were seconding her husband. As the bell sounded and gave to Fitzsimmons another chance she sent a messenger to his corner and told him to change his method of fighting. Corbett stood in the middle of the ring, showing no

distress. He walked to his corner without a mark on his face and without a red spot showing on his body.

Fitzsimmons came up for the sixth round still showing the effects of the punishment received in the earlier sessions. His first move looked as if he were willing to lose the fight on a foul. He rushed to a clinch, threw his forearm across Corbett's throat, and, exerting all his power, forced Corbett's head back until some at the ringside feared that his neck would be broken. The referee sprang forward and parted the two antagonists, while the cry of "Foul!" went up. Siler evidently thought no great damage had been done and motioned for the men to get into action.

Corbett was enraged, and with his first lead got Fitzsimmons with a heavy right to the chin. They clinched and as they broke away Corbett again sent his opponent's head back with a fearful right uppercut. Fitzsimmons was dazed and Corbett had no difficulty then in landing a second right full on the mouth, splattering Fitzsimmons' blood all about the ring.

Again Delaney sprang to his feet and again the warning cry was given. "Take your time, Jim! Don't be in a hurry!"

As he shouted Corbett drove in a right and left to the face. Fitzsimmons was too weak to make a fair defense, and he was utterly unable to assume the offensive. All he could do was to save himself in the clinches. When he was forced to break he stood with his legs far apart, assembling all his strength to keep his feet.

### THE MYSTERIOUS WARNING

Corbett landed a right to the chin and Fitzsimmons fell to the floor. He rested on his knee while the referee slowly counted the seconds. Corbett walked a little distance away and again came the mysterious warning from his corner to take his time. These suggestions were beyond the power of the spectators to understand.

Fitzsimmons, unable to protect himself, apparently could have been knocked out at any time Corbett wished to land the final punch. Instead of taking advantage of his long lead Corbett kept away. He drew back whenever an opening presented, landing only the lightest of punches. Fitzsimmons clinched and hugged and Corbett made little effort to force him off. When the round was nearly over Fitzsimmons again began to swing his fists, but was unable to give force or direction to his blows. Corbett laughed at him, but stood without making an effort to do damage. Then the gong sounded and Corbett walked to his corner, apparently the most discouraged man in the house. Those who saw victory ahead for him failed to understand his attitude.

Fitzsimmons came up for the seventh round, dazed and weak, and though it appeared certain that Corbett must win one of Fitzsimmons' backers stood at the ringside taking every dollar of Corbett money that was offered, asking no longer odds than 10 to 6 for his wagers.

When the men advanced for the seventh round a different Corbett was seen. Up to that moment he had been able to handle Fitzsimmons much as a full grown man handles a boy. Yet in the seventh Fitzsimmons drove him all around the ring. He was forced against the ropes whenever they bumped together. His blows, that had been well timed and accurately placed, lacked power and precision.

Just before the round ended Corbett apparently came to his senses and for a moment showed a flash of his earlier ability and sent in some smashing blows.

The eighth round was a repetition of the seventh, except that Fitzsimmons came to the front much refreshed. Fitzsimmons fought as if the advantage were all his. Corbett contented himself with straightening his left and jabbing Fitzsimmons in the nose. On one occasion the two men exchanged words in the ring that were understood by no one but themselves. Corbett, apparently enraged, met his opponent with a right hand blow that flattened his nose. Then he forced matters and placed two lefts to the face and a hard right under the heart. Fitzsimmons weakened and clinched and then again assumed the aggressive, though he did little damage to his opponent. Corbett contented himself with a defensive attitude.

Just before the ninth round closed Fitzsimmons, covered with blood and leg weary, received a hard blow on the chin. He fell against the ropes and Corbett drew back his right to send in what might have been a decisive blow. Fitzsimmons' hands hung by his sides and he was utterly unable to protect himself, when from Corbett's corner came the cry: "Look out for him, Jim, he's shamming! He isn't as weak as he looks!" Corbett smiled in derision at his opponent,

but made no further move until the bell sent them to their corners.

Fitzsimmons opened the tenth round in a determined manner. Corbett dodged a heavy left and Fitzsimmons stumbled to the ropes. As he turned Corbett stepped in and drove his right to the ear. He had full swing for the blow, but there was no force behind it. Fitzsimmons clinched and they were in the middle of the ring when they broke. Corbett waited and Fitzsimmons swung a failure for the face. Corbett countered on the nose and Fitzsimmons again clinched. As they broke Fitzsimmons tried a left jab for the ribs, but Corbett stopped it with his glove and laughed.

### PUNCHES ARE STINGLESS

In the meantime Fitzsimmons was not being punished severely and his strength was returning to him. Corbett showed no desire or ability to distress his opponent. He landed at will, but there was no sting to his punches. Clinches were frequent in this round and Fitzsimmons made good use of his left, which reached Corbett's head repeatedly, but, so far as the spectators could see, did little damage. There were some who judged from Corbett's lack of force that he was tiring, but he went to his corner without a falter being noticed in his stride.

Fitzsimmons turned up for the eleventh round as if he realized that victory was assured. He drove Corbett about the ring, inflicting little punishment and taking a few left blows to the face and right to the body. Once Fitzsimmons hooked Corbett on the chin. The champion seemed to become enraged, and, bracing himself, drove first his left and then his right to Fitzsimmons' face, splattering the blood in every direction. This surprised Fitzsimmons and they clinched. In the break Corbett drove his right to the ribs absolutely without return. Again Fitzsimmons seemed to be at the mercy of Corbett, and Delaney, shouted: "Jim, look out for that right!"

Corbett kept away until Fitzsimmons had recuperated. Then in the last 10 seconds of the round he landed on Fitzsimmons' face at will. They were in a clinch as the bell sounded and Corbett apparently was much the fresher of the two.

Corbett opened the twelfth round by feinting. Fitzsimmons was ineffective in his leads and Corbett poked his left to the nose as he pleased. Fitzsimmons was bleeding. Corbett then drove a heavy left to the body and took a jolt on the chin in return. They clinched and Corbett landed two more right handers to the jaw as they separated, Fitzsimmons' head rocking heavily. Corbett was again taking a long lead and his friends were confident he could end the fight when it pleased him. Corbett, who had missed hardly one of his blows, swung a terrific right uppercut just before the gong ended the round. The blow missed Fitzsimmons' face by a full foot, and there were those in the arena who expressed the opinion that the blow had not been well intended.

Fitzsimmons always regarded the thirteenth as his lucky round and he hustled out of his corner as if he expected to settle matters. Corbett drove a hard right to the heart and Fitzsimmons slowed up. That lasted only for a minute, however, and the Cornishman then began to drive Corbett before him around the ring. They sparred rather cautiously and then Corbett was forced against the ropes. Corbett scored repeatedly, but with no force. A moment before the gong Corbett made a swing that landed a right uppercut and two lefts, all three blows reaching Fitzsimmons' face, covering him with blood.

As the men came to the middle of the ring for the fourteenth round Corbett placed a hard left on the mouth, shaking Fitzsimmons thoroughly. The Cornishman rushed and received a second blow of the same kind. These two blows seemed to damage the giver more than they did the receiver. Fitzsimmons passed an overhead right that caught Corbett on the ear. They clinched and Fitzsimmons worked Corbett clear across the ring. Fitzsimmons landed two heavy blows on the chin, neither of which distressed Corbett.

Then the champion stepped forward, crouching slightly. Fitzsimmons straightened up and drove his left to the body, catching Corbett hard directly under the heart. Few of those around the ring saw this blow as it was actually delivered. Fitzsimmons' fist after landing continued in a half swing and caught Corbett on the jaw. Corbett fell to his knees and as he did so Fitzsimmons landed another left to the jaw. There were cries of "Foul!" of which the referee took no notice.

Corbett gradually toppled over until his hands rested on the floor. Then with his left hand he rasped the flesh over his heart. It was at this moment that Corbett, who was half out of focus of the camera, reached forward with his right hand and caught one of the ropes. Then he swung himself around directly facing the camera. He was in this position when counted out.

No sooner had the word been uttered taking the championship from him than Corbett was on his feet. He threw both hands in the air above his head, then rushed over to where Fitzsimmons was standing near the ropes. His brother Joe caught Corbett by the arm, but Jim easily freed himself, and, dodging past others in the ring, struck Fitzsimmons, who was waving two small American flags. There was plenty of force in that blow, the blow that his friends thought might have been delivered in any round after the fifth. Fitzsimmons fell to the floor and his friends were compelled to carry him to his corner and place him in his chair.

Siler raised his voice above the din at the ring and shouted "Fitzsimmons wins!"

Tears coursed down Corbett's cheeks. "I'm not licked," he said. "I am strong and full of fight. I am willing to fight on if he is willing. The championship is his. The bets have been won. Now I want to show which is the best man. This is a tough deal, boys."

Deputy sheriffs cleared the ring and Corbett and Fitzsimmons were brought together to shake hands. Corbett then admitted that he had been whipped, but said he was sure he was the better man. He asked Fitzsimmons for a return fight and Fitzsimmons responded: "I will never fight again."

W. A. Brady, who had acted as Corbett's manager, issued an immediate challenge to Fitzsimmons for a return fight for \$10,000. Fitzsimmons merely smiled and shook his head.

In order to stop misunderstanding it should be said that the very great majority of those who saw the fight and the great majority of those who have discussed it in private and public have not doubted that the battle was honestly fought, honestly lost and honestly won. There are many, however, and among them some of the best judges of pugilism in America, who believe that Corbett could have won the fight in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth round. Although Fitzsimmons fought many battles after winning from Corbett he never would consent to give his old antagonist a return match.