CLASSIC PUGILISM.

HOMER WAS THE FORERUNNER OF THE MODERN REPORTER.

How the Great Epic Poet Described a "Slugging" Match—Some of His "Copy" Would Be Rejected by the Average Sporting Editor—His Wrestling Bouts.

There was a time—between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago—when it was as well worth while for a man to be a champion pugilist as it is now. Such a man was then appreciated at his full value, even taking as the measure of that value his own opinion of himself. He who could meet all comers at the Olympian games ceased thereafter to be an ordinary mortal. The government supported him for life, he was exempt from taxes, he had a free pass to all public entertainments, his name was engraved on marble tablets and his statue was erected in the sacred grove of Elis, beside the gold and ivory Jupiter of Phidias. The games themselves in which he had won honor formed epochs in history, by reference to which the dates of other events were fixed.

Homer, in describing the games held by Achilles at the funeral of his friend, Patroclus, tells how the hero put up as "prizes of the violent boxing match" a valuable mule, warranted sound, for the victor and for the vanquished a two handled cup. It was to be a free to all, go-as-you-please fight, and from all that appears no betting was allowed.

Homer continues: "Forthwith arose a man great and valiant and skilled in boxing, Epeos, son of Panopeus, and laid his hand on the sturdy mule and said aloud: 'Let any one come and take the two handled cup, but the mule I say none other of the Achaians shall take for victory with his fists, for I claim to be the best man here. I will utterly bruise mine adversary's flesh and break his bones; so let his friends abide together here and bear him forth when vanquished by my hands.'"

Our modern gladiator has publicly voiced practically the same sentiment, thus: "I am John L. Sullivan and I can lick any man in this crowd."

The poet goes on: "Alone arose against him Euryalus, a godlike man, son of King Mecisteus. Tydides, famous with the spear, made ready Euryalus for the fight, cheering him with speech and greatly desired for him victory. And first he cast about him a girdle, and next gave him the well cut thongs of the hide of an ox of the field, and the two boxers, being girt, went into the midst of the ring, and both, lifting up their stalwart hands, fell to, and their hands joined battle grievously. Then was there terrible grinding of teeth, and sweat flowed from all their limbs. And noble Epeos came on, and, as the other spied for an opening, smote him on the cheek, nor could he longer stand, for his fair limbs failed straightway under him. And as when beneath the north wind's ripple a fish leapeth on a tangle covered beach, and then the black wave hideth it, so leaped up Euryalus at that blow. But great hearted Epeos took him in his hands and set him upright and his dear comrades stood around him and bore him from the ring with trailing feet, spitting out clotted blood, drooping his head awry, and they set him down in his swoon among them and themselves went back and fetched the two handled cup."

Euryalus was knocked out in one round. Such a description of the similar New Orleans contest would perhaps serve people better than the elaborate work of art which was prepared for them. The poet does not descend to details—he does not give information enough. But then perhaps Homer does not aim to give information merely. He seeks rather to present a picture, and the picture is there.

It will be noticed that there were no "clinches" in this struggle, but it is otherwise in the next game which the greatest of epic bards goes on to describe. Achilles offers a tripod for use before the fire as a prize for the winner in the "grievous wrestling match," and, speaking to the assembled Greeks, opens the contest with these words, "Rise all who would enter this combat."

"Thereupon arose great Ajax, son of Telamon, and Odysseus, of many wiles, the crafty minded. And the two being girt went into the midst of the ring and clasped each other in their arms with mighty hands like gable rafters of a lofty house which some famed craftsman joineth, that he may baffle the wind's force. And their backs creaked, gripped firmly under the vigorous hands, and sweat ran down in streams, and many weals along their ribs and shoulders sprang up red with blood, while ever they strove amain for victory, to win the wrought tripod."

After this sort of thing had gone on for awhile it "began to irk the well greaved Achaians"—i. e., it made the crowd tired. To settle matters, Ajax, by agreement, first lifts Odysseus and tries to throw him, but he "struck deftly from behind the hollow of Aias' knee and loosed his limbs and threw him down backward, and Odysseus fell upon his chest, and the people stared and wondered. Then in his turn much enduring, noble Odysseus tried to lift, and moved him a little from the ground, but could not lift him, so he crooked his knee within the other's, and both fell on the ground near to each other and were soiled with dust."

Then Achilles interferes. "Victory is with both," he said. "Take equal prizes and depart that other Achaians may contend." In modern parlance, they fought to a draw. There was no "kicking" against the referee's decision. The combatants "wiped the dust from them and put their doublets on." The description is poetical—not practical. It has been admired and lauded by all the world for 3,000 years or more, yet if it was sent to the average American newspaper editor as an account of an actual occurrence for publication in the sporting columns it would be rejected with scorn.—New York World.

A SAILOR'S BURIAL.

An Impressive Service at Sea on Board a Man-of-war When a Seaman Dies.

When maritime Jack dies he is buried without much undue ceremony. A brief prayer, a shotted hammock, the lee rail, and all is over. But on board a ship-of-war a sailor's funeral is pathetic in its dignified simplicity. No muster of the ship's company is, naturally, so sad as this, and you can see it on the faces of all when the subdued shrilling of the bo'sw'n's whistle is followed by the long drawn out and modulated call of "All hands bury the dead!"

The men come aft quietly and take their alloted stations. To leeward, if it be at sea, or upon the port side of the quarter deck, if not in port, the seamen are ranged in the front rank; behind them are the ordinary seamen and in the rear of both the apprentices and the landsmen. In the gangway forward of the mainmast on such ships as still have sail power senior petty officers stand at attention. Around the coffin, folded in the jack or national ensign, are grouped the pallbearers, selected usually from the dead man's mess or gun division, and close at hand, resting on arms, the marine guard is paraded. Nearest the coffin are the chaplain and the captain, and then in order of their rank stretch aft the other officers of the ship.

The ensign at the peak or staff flutters tremblingly at half mast, and from overhead the yard and stay tackles swing lazily, ready to lift the coffin outboard. When the weather permits the way of the ship is stopped, and, it may be, little flickers of idling steam curl upward and to leeward like incense, and the wind in the backed and fretting topsails murmurs a dirge. The order to "uncover" is passed gently, and while the beautiful words of the burial service are being read the hush of the living is accentuated by the low accompaniments of sea sounds—by the rumple of eager waters eddying sternward, and by the surging of the breeze in the hollows of the canvas and through the rigging and gear.

When the closing prayer is said, the last blessing given, the tackles are manned, the coffin is stripped of its flags and slung in straps, and slowly, reverently is hoisted above the rail and clear of the ship until it is poised over the billows. The marines load, aim, fire, in all three volleys, that awaken rattling echoes in the hidden spaces of the ship: the bugle sounds "taps" tenderly and sweetly, with a newer meaning of sleep and rest; the coffin swings further out and is lowered gently until the foam and spoondrift moisten it; the tackles are detached with sudden jerk, and in an instant the weighted box shoots downward, bedded in foam and bubbles, and all is over until the sea gives up the dead.

In a little while the cheery whistles trill out a call to duty; the half masted ensign climbs to the dasher block; the ship is brought to her course, and dazedly the men take up the wearying routine of the lives so sadly broken. An unusual quiet rests upon the vessel and around the mess tables, but in the groups gathered to smoke during the supper hour and after the hammocks are piped down the virtues—those heroic and honest sea virtues—of the dead sailor are recalled, and with a tenderness born of a comradeship closer than any other men except soldiers may know.—New York Tablet.

The Wearing of Amulets.

Who wore the first amulet it would be impossible to say, but the adoption of a talisman to ward off evil is of very ancient origin.

Phylacteries, the Greek word for amulets, were worn by the Israelites, to which allusion is made in the Scriptures. These phylacteries were narrow strips of parchment on which were written passages from the Old Testament. A strip was placed in a small leathern box and bound to the left elbow by a narrow strap. There was a smaller phylactery for the forehead, the box for which was about an inch square.

The word amulet is of Arabic origin, and implies a thing suspended. Amulets were of various kinds. The moonstone found in the desert of Arabia was worn as a talisman against enchantment by the women, who suspended it around the neck. It was a white, transparent stone, the time for searching for it being midnight.—Detroit Free Press.

An Unknown Wild Animal.

Deer isle is disturbed greatly about an unknown wild animal which, it is claimed, has been around there several years. He has been seen by quite a number of persons at twilight or in the evening, and once or twice has been seen in the daytime, and is described as being about the size of a large dog, and somewhat resembling both a dog and a cat, having a catlike head and tail, the tail being long and the ears short. He has a most peculiar cry, something between a snarl and a growl, and persists in following people along the road, especially in the evening. It does not molest any one, neither can it be frightened off, but will follow one along, keeping in the woods near the road and occasionally making its peculiar call. A few people think it to be a lynx which, in some manner, reached the island from the mainland on some ice.—Bangor (Me.) Commercial.

Interesting London Signs.

On the celebrated Bow church, which elbows its way into busy Cheapside, there is this notice, rather more curtly put than is the custom here, "Stick no bills on this church."

Over a shop in a town a few miles out of London I read, "The private part of this house to let."

The possibilities of a barber's life in the world's metropolis are suggested by the following, which made a brave showing in a barber's shop a few steps out of High Holborn (the last word being pronounced, by the way, with the first "o" long, and as though there were no "l" in it—Ho-burn): "Hair cutting, 6d.; shampooing, 6d.; shaving, 3d.; cleaning and scraping teeth, 6d.; hats blocked, 3d. Double charge for ladies."—London Cor. New York Tribune.

Sir Boyle Roche's Famous "Bulls."

Sir Boyle Roche, too, whose bulls made him famous, on one occasion assured a wonder stricken body of voters that, if elected, he would put a stop to smuggling practices in the Shannon by "having two frigates stationed on the opposite points at the mouth of the river, and there they should remain fixed, with strict orders not to stir, and so, by cruising and cruising about, they would be able to intercept everything that should attempt to pass between them."

Another time, when on the hustings, he observed, "England, it must be allowed, is the mother country, and therefore I would advise them (England and Ireland) to live in filial affection together like sisters, as they are and ought to be." This was only equaled by his—when opposing his antiministerial motion—wishing the said motion "was at the bottom of the bottomless pit."—London Standard.

Overjoyed.

Travers—Strange what different emotions some occasions will bring out. I was down to the races, and in the excitement my tailor, who happened to be there, actually came up and threw his arms around my neck.

Dashaway—I suppose he had picked a winner, hadn't he?

Travers—No, but he saw that I had.—Clothier and Furnisher.

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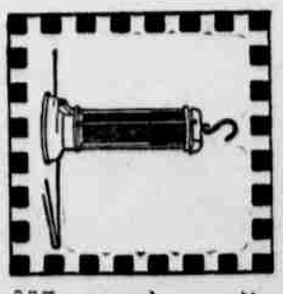

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