

SENTIMENT and SOCKS : : By James A. Garner

A Red Blooded Story of Courage and Strange Ambition

(Continued from Last Week)

Well, that fifth round was the best and perhaps the saddest I have ever seen. Larkins sprang from his corner full of fight. Hawkins was as full of determination as a gamecock.

They came together like steam engines and leather flew furiously for a few seconds. Larkins straightened up and sent that left jab to the champion's forehead and from all appearances was leading forward to bring a right swing to the same place when Hawkins, seemingly going backwards, let fly a right hand swing that started from his knees and stopped solidly on the young lad's jaw.

And Johnnie never delivered that right he started. Instead, he just did a backward flop and landed on his back. He did not twitch until the referee was counting seven; then he raised his feet from the floor instead of his head. That seemed glued there for he did not move it once during the three seconds that followed. He crossed his legs and moved like a wrestler in distress, but the upper portion of his body reminded one of a Gulliver bound from the waist up.

Three seconds after he started to squirm cheers went up for the champion who had defended his title against the only man who had a chance to take it from him. One minute later and another cheer went up for the man who had met his first defeat in the squared circle. This last, I believe, was greater than the first, for all were in sympathy with the lad whom Gans had taught.

We yelled to him to try again, but deep down within us we knew that unless he changed his chief second or his style of fighting back to his former demonstrations he was to go down to defeat again. Nevertheless we yelled for him because we liked him and hoped him all the success the admiring fans ever wished a fighter.

It must have been a month or more

before young Larkins entered the ring again. This time his opponent was the same man who had given him his lesson in the lack of sentiment in the ring. Larkins smiled as he entered the ropes. But . . . (I would like to use the expression we used at the ringside, but such language must not be used in polite society) there was that same big black in his corner and he was giving the lad instructions.

Had not my friends denied me, I would have gone over and tried to tell the boy to get rid of that man or if he could not, to ignore instruction and do as he had done under the tutelage of Gans. It is just as well, however, that I was kept out of the affair for what followed was a treat that my advice would not have afforded.

Larkins was again the master boxer. He boxed the champion to a stand-still and was using more speed behind each punch than ever before. Four rounds of pokes and punches, swings and swipes, was enough to insure victory under any circumstances short of a knockout. Four rounds of taking blows on his shoulders, ducking others and side-stepping the rest made the champion look like an amateur.

But the fight did not end in the fourth. It was billed for eight.

The fifth was a duplicate of that former fifth up to the point when Johnnie took the count. He landed the same sort of blow and was about to follow it with a right when up came that lightning-like right swing. It landed. But just a few inches farther toward the left than did the former so it was Johnnie's nose that caught the blow this time instead of his chin. Again he did the back-

ward flop but landed on his haunches instead of his shoulders. A stream of crimson flowed down over his trunks. He sat there and the whole house was silent while the referee counted up to five.

At that moment the big black, whom I disliked, yelled as if his life depended upon the result of his . . .

"Get up, Johnnie! For Gawd's sake, Git UP!"

The spell of the silence was broken. We all laughed.

Little Johnnie turned his head toward the black and I could see the second was telling him something but the uproar was so great that I could not hear a word. But whatever it was, it brought the youngster to his feet at the count of eight. Then like a madman he tore into the champion and delivered three blows in such quick succession that it was hard to

tell that he had used his left twice, left, a right uppercut, and a left hook and his right once.

But that is what he did. A straight

Continued on Page Four

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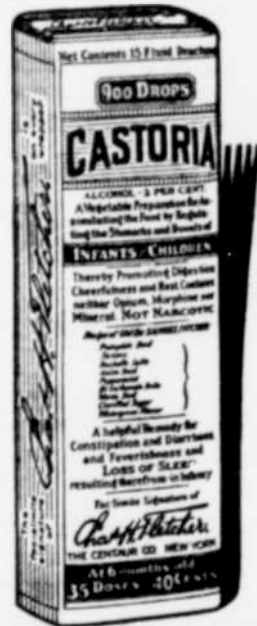


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