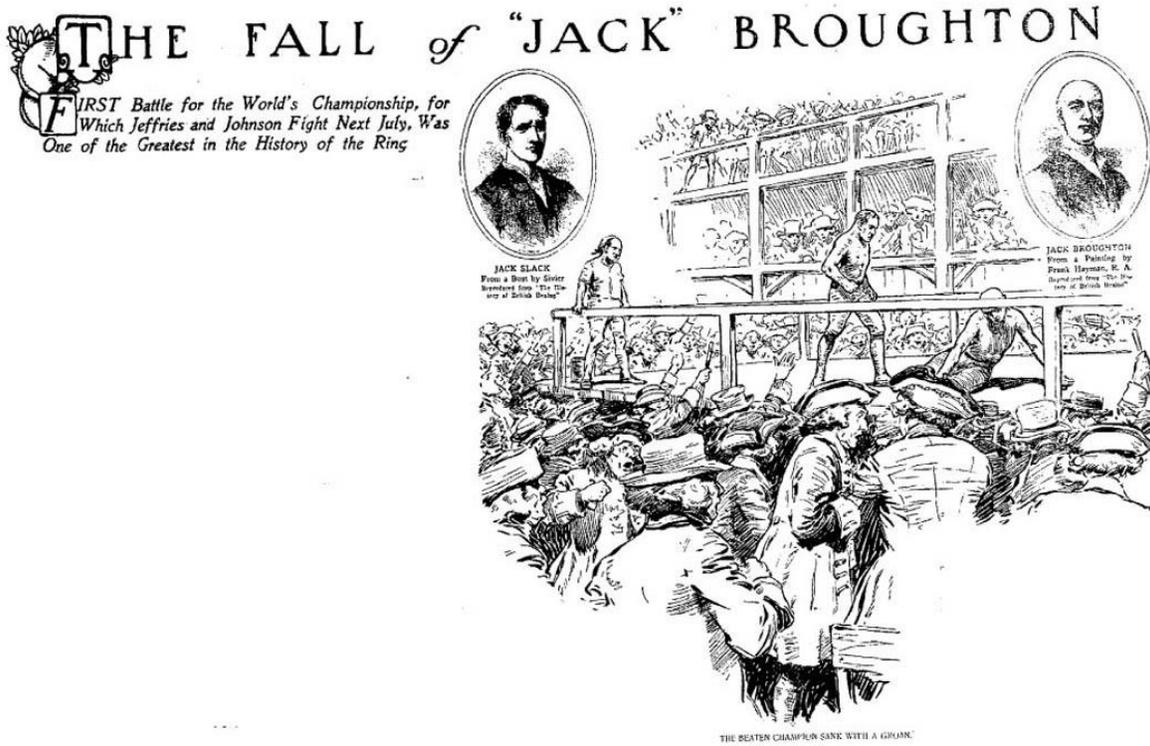


## The fall of Jack Broughton



YOU had best see 'Jack' Slack," said Captain Cleveland with a grin. He has your name fighting for breath" Broughton turned, frowning "what has butcher to say of me" he demanded.

"That he's a better man than ever you were" said Cleveland."He's over there at the rail with a court of his hangers on and to hear him he's beaten you thirty times within the hour". Broughton made a gesture of impatience. "from all accounts he's a rare plucked one at the talking. "lets see how he will talk with me to listen". He shouldered away from the throng in the direction indicated by Cleveland.

It was a day of racing at Hounslow and the course was lined by the thousands come from London for the days sport. gentility and commonality were mingled on the green, gold lace hobnobbing with fustian Broughton himself, for many years the undisputed champion of the "Science of self defense", who Had arrived in the company of the Duke of Cumberland his friend and patron. It was that distinguished sportsman that Captain Cleveland now sought out and he found him standing near his coach.



"There's good game afoot, Your Highness," said Cleveland. eagerly. "What would you say to a match between Broughton and Slack, the butcher ?" "Now that was well thought of," said Duke William, firmly. "This fellow Slack is a hardy and courageous fighter, I know of no one, save only George Taylor, likely to give Broughton a close brush. are they met together ?"

"They are together now." chuckled Cleveland, though what will come of It is not sure as yet. By great good luck I was near the rail when I heard Slack bawling fire and thunder, among his friends, you may be sure. He miscalled Broughton and I hastened do our champion the good service of an informer, you know how quick he is to stand upon his name and reputation." "Good." said the Duke. "Slack should find backers if he is minded to enter the ring." "He will." answered Cleveland. "He has quite a following. You Highness will have no trouble finding takers for your money, though the odds may be long"

The Duke rubbed his hands cheerfully. "Rare sport For a big wager, Cleveland. What more can we ask? And for other reasons we should be glad to Broughton put to it. He has had no serious contender these many years and the man was growing insufferable with his grumbling and his humours. this should put him on edge". "He has a very small opinion of Slack," said Cleveland "the more so that the butcher was but recently beaten by George Taylor". "And a hard, clean light it was," nodded the Duke, " Slack is promising and will mill until he cannot lift a hand." "You have no doubt of Broughton's superiority?"

"What doubt could I have? Broughton has beaten Taylor and Taylor has whipped Slack, Broughton is invincible. The butcher is a slogging hitter, of good bottom and courage . I have seen him stand up with up with Smith, the Suffolk champion, for a long hour when be was weaving on his legs and his second ready to cry the word, and he won in the end. But he cannot stand to Broughton.

### **Broughton Like an Ox.**

Your Highness is undoubtedly right," said Cleveland, "though Slack's youth and strength will make him a worthy foeman. Here comes Broughton now with battle in his eye."

The great boxer was shouldering his way through the crowd toward his royal patron, whom he saluted he came up. He was a man of tremendous build, mighty limbs and erect pose, just under six feet in height and a figure of note in any gathering. Originally a Thames waterman, he had practiced the "manly arts of, back sword, cudgeling and boxing" since the days of Fig. the first great public fighter from 1743, seven years before, his amphitheatre in Oxford road had been the acknowledged center of pugilism, where he managed the best matches of the game and taught the young bloods of the town.

Broughton's following was numerous and aristocratic and since the failure of George Taylor's rival establishment he had enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity. The Duke of Cumberland had taken him under His special protection and the pugilist had accompanied his royal friend during a tour of the Continent.

Through the same benefactor Broughton had been made a Yeoman of the Guard and had attained recognition in court circles. In appearance the champion was graceful and of great symmetry his expression was frank and engaging, manly and dignified. His bright eyes were remarkably keen and contributed no little to the impression of confidence and command felt by all who came in contact with him.

**"Well Jack" said the Duke, "Cleveland tells me you have met the Butcher. What do you make of him"**. "Little enough" said Broughton with the blunt straightforward manner he adopted toward all, gentle and simple. "It sticks in my head that this Slack is a coward". "I'll warrant he is none" cried the Duke. **"But what passed between you"**. "I found him crowing among his chickens. he was making free of me that I was old and fat with high living and had lost my bottom and could not stand up like a man. I should of clouted the rouge on the spot save for having in mind the sport I could give your highness and the greater pleasure of milling him soundly".

**"What's this you have to say to me"** I said and laid a hand on his shoulder. He spun around where he stood and his jaw fell away. I was hot a horse whip is what you need to teach you manners" I said. He twisted away but some of them about him began to murmur and he faced again. **"Will you fight?"** I asked him. **"Aye I will"** "Then hold your tongue between your teeth come the time to misname the man who beats you," I told him the surely dog"

**"You did well, Jack,"** said the Duke. **"You fight him in your Amphitheatre"**. **"Two weeks hence,"** said Broughton, "unless on sober thought he takes to his heels. To hold him let's put up the whole house as a purse. If I can not thrash I will take no losers sweets to hold my stomach. With him fresh from Beating by George Taylor he has his friends to back him, £200 he says. I covered that as a side. Is you highness minded to venture on me . "Every farthing I can find a taker for, " Answered the Duke enthusiastically.

### **Bets on the Battle.**

Captain Cleveland was watching the champion keenly. **"Two weeks is none to long in which to lose some of the weight on that great body of yours, Broughton"** he said. The boxer flushed. "Slack will find me light and heavy enough, and you too, Captain Cleveland, if you care to wager on the butcher's chances.

Cleveland held his peace, but he was not convinced. Broughton, to a careful eye was a trifle too portly for fast work in company with a vigorous youngster like Slack. It was evident, moreover, that the champion despised his adversary and would make no efforts to bring himself to condition. The captain promised himself to hare a look at Slack before he risked money on the outcome.

On April 10, 1750, the day before that set for the battle, Broughton sent one of his supporters to the inn where Slack had put up. The messenger carried ten guineas which he presented to the pugilist, explaining that Broughton desired to clinch the arrangement beyond any possible doubt. **"Does he think I shall fail to be there, then?"** asked Slack, pocketing the coins. "He feared you might draw out," said the envoy. **"Tell him I keep his money to bet against him"** said Slack. **"And let him rest easy. 'Jack' Broughton will have cause to know that I am knee to**

**knee with him."**

Slack, who was then at the height of his powers, had been a butcher in Norwich. He had fought a straight series of victories through the provinces and had come to London in the preceding January to try his fortune with the members of the notable group that gathered about Broughton. His first trial had ended in defeat at the hands of George Taylor after a desperate contest.

He was fully three inches shorter than Broughton, though his weight was nearly equal to the champion's in his prime. His build was rather compact than graceful, with thick ankles and wrists and extraordinary width of chest. He had learned the various blows and methods of guarding as first devised by Broughton, but had developed a style of his own being remarkably agile and quick of eye. It was said of him that he never gave back in a rally and that he stood ready to meet a knockout blow if he could not stop it, rather than jump out of range.

For all Broughton's scorn of him Slack had not the slightest streak of the coward. He had stood up to Taylor until flesh and bone could do no more. After that crushing defeat, with his star checked and faltering on its upward course, the Butcher had determined upon a plan that testified both to his shrewdness and to his undeterred ambition. Beaten by Taylor, he aspired to obtain a match with the conqueror of Taylor and snatch the laurels from the father of the science. His behavior had been directed to that end and Broughton's fear of his withdrawal amused him mightily.

At nine o'clock of Wednesday morning the doors of Broughton's amphitheatre were thrown open to the swarm of men and boys that had gathered in Oxford Road. These early comers were the spectators of the pit. The champions were not to meet until noon and the wealthier patrons of the sport never arrived until shortly before that time.

In the center stood the stage, or ring, twenty five feet square and raised some five feet from the ground. The space about this was the pit. At the sides, roofed over, were the boxes, and above them was a gallery. The stage and pit were open to the air. Some three thousand spectators could be accommodated within the walls.

### **The Gladiators**

The Duke of Cumberland was amongst the first to appear in the boxes and as his acquaintances began to arrive his betting tablets were in requisition. He looked upon any wager on Slack as found money and gave five and six to one with great willingness. His alacrity did not meet with its proper response however. Since the company generally felt that the relative chances of the adversaries could be better judged after a round or two. Broughton's retirement and Slack's rather obscure record left little room for judgment. Captain Cleveland was on hand early but ventured no money though the Duke made him several tempting offers.

A few minutes before noon there was a commotion in the crowd and the combatants, each followed by his second, entered the amphitheatre from the retiring rooms. They mounted the ladder to the stage and clambering over the rails chose their corners. The pit greeted them with roars of applause the boxes and gallery with handclapping and bravo's as they stood bowing.

Two finer gladiators never faced each other than these, one the man who established the fundamental rules and principles of fistic combat, and the other the younger pupil of his school, who had come to dispute pre eminence with the veteran. They were stripped to the waist with light belted breeches and pumps. They wore no gloves or bandages upon their hands, for "**mufflers**" were paraphernalia of the game considered proper only tyros and exquisites.

Broughton albeit showing some of the effects of soft living had lost none of his impressiveness or ease. His muscles, to the discerning eye, might have seemed to run a trifle too smoothly and plumply, his shoulders to have lost some of their squareness, but his massive arms held as a great promise of tremendous blows as ever. He held his head high and stepped as firmly. To the crowd that cheered him he was the peerless Broughton, the man of national renown, favorite of princes and of fortune.

Slack won his reception through his modest bearing clean appearance and the reputation gained by his plucky showing against Taylor. His skin was pink and firm with youth and health, the muscles rippling and cording with every movement. He turned away quickly to his corner. As the uproar died one of his enthusiastic supporters, a member of his own former calling, shouted "**Hit un a slack un. Jack Slack!**" This was meant as a subtly flattering allusion to the butcher's smashing right swing, which had brought his name into the vernacular of the time. Slack smiled and held up his hand in deprecation of the laughter and cheers that followed the sally.

Major Legrange and Mr. John Dudley were selected by Broughton and Slack from amongst the occupants of the boxes as their umpires. Those gentlemen did not enter the ring since under Broughton's rules the stage was sacred to combatants and seconds during the battle. They took up their position in the same box and compared watches for the purpose of timing the half minutes between rounds allowed to the boxers in which to take their positions after a fall. The preliminaries having been observed the men stepped forward and the amphitheatre fell suddenly silent. They moved with dignity toward the center of the ring. On the flooring was chalked a square of a yard and each man keeping watchful eyes upon the other placed one foot at his side of the square.

### **Bung His Peepers**

The contrasting styles of the two boxers were immediately apparent as they shook hands and stretched out their arms in readiness for the set to. Slack's position was poorly calculated for shifty tactics which it was his custom to rely on. He stood upright, with his weight on the broad of his feet which were slightly separated from his attitude he could step forward with his body behind his arm, but could not yield readily. With his right fist he guarded the pit of his stomach, his left was advanced at the level of his mouth.

Broughton's pose was more easy and graceful. His stood oil springy knees, well balanced for hitting and getting away, a practice that he had first introduced into the downright hammering of the early game. His fists were held forward and before his chest, his head well up and back. His superiority in weight, height and posture over his opponent was clear to every follower of the sport.

Slack waited for the veteran to open the contest, And Broughton. slashing out suddenly, sent his right home on his opponent's chin. Instantly the silence with which the spectators had awaited the first clash was broken by a wave of applause, and as Slack ripped in three ineffective blows the shouting swelled in volume. Slack's unwillingness to dodge or shift gave Broughton a chance to get in a battering jab to the face and the butcher staggered back, his right cheek cut wide open. Broughton followed, up his advantage and closed with his adversary. For a breath they struggled, each trying for a cross buttock, when Broughton forced the other from his feet, landing uppermost in the fall.

The seconds hurried from their corners, each assisting his man to rise, encouraging him, blowing a spray of water into his eyes and ears and seating him on his knee. Broughton was without a scratch, but Slack's face was raw. Both men were fresh and lively when they approached their marks for the second round. Broughton's friends were jubilant, the Duke of Cumberland leading the cheers The Duke offered eight to one, but betters were scarce, wailing for further proof of Slack's ability. Cleveland had not booked a single wager.

On being set for the next, round Slack became suddenly the aggressor . he rushed in with one of his terrific right smashes taking the check that Broughton launched at him. The veteran stepped back easily catching th "slack un" on his arm and countering with his dreaded lunge under the left ear. Slack would not be denied and closed but Broughton slipping from his hold hurried him to the floor with a clean resounding blow to the chest.

The butcher picked himself up nimbly and retired to sit upon the knee of his second. There was no doubt left in the minds of the Broughton contingent that the veteran was the better man and the match a final triumph for the master. Slack's partisans shouted disapproval of his showing and his vociferous fellow tradesman was forward with advice.

**"Bung his peepers'. Bung his peepers"** he howled. Slack only smiled, and Captain Cleveland, who kept a careful watch upon him, could see the man was scarcely breathed for all his rough handling he had been through. Broughton on the other hand, found his second's knee a welcome resting place and was panting with his exertions. At the lapse of the half minute the boxers came to the center for the third round. Slack seemed less willing to take his chance of Broughton's formidable blows and closed almost immediately. The veteran thrust his thigh over for a cross buttock, but the butcher eluded it, and they fell together. Slack again underneath. At the fourth round the butcher wasted even less time in bringing about a fall, Cleveland ever alert, began to understand. Slack's hard condition gave him little to fear from the struggle at close quarters and the crash to the stage.

Broughton, on the other hand, was safer when on his feet and at long range, plainly trying to avoid the falls and to knock down his opponent while keeping his own feet. The fifth and sixth rounds almost with a blow. Slack slipping in to a hold and Broughton unable to avoid him. The sixth round ended with a desperate wrestle., in which the veteran landed heavily upon the butcher. Slack required his second's aid in rising.

### **The Desperate Fight.**

The men had been fighting for eight minutes and bets were now flying fast among the spectators.

The Duke had placed several minor wagers, but was anxiously seeking some one who would take him for a heavy sum. "**Ten to one on Broughton**" he cried; "**ten to one!**" Captain Cleveland was at his elbow. "**How much will Your Highness venture'?**" he asked. The Duke opened his tablets. "**Ten thousand pounds,**" he said. "**Done,**" answered Cleveland carelessly, and made his note of the transaction. Slack, sitting on his second's knee heard the offer of the Duke, which immediately became the ruling price among all the spectators, in pit and boxes.

"**Jemmy.**" said the butcher, turning to his second with a grin, "**take that ten guineas that Broughton sent and back me with them at the odds.**" The second nodded, and, calling one of his friends near the stage, gave him the commission.

Broughton's broad chest was rising and falling with deep rapid breaths as the men came together for the seventh round. Slack, though he had suffered in the last fall seemed to have no trouble with his wind and advanced smiling. Again the crowd in the pit yelled "**bung his peepers, bung his peepers**"

Slack opened the round with a swift blow to the head, the second blow ripped the veteran's ear, but before the butcher could recover Broughton had smashed in his stomach blow with which he had ended many a contest. It caught Slack fairly in the body and dropped him to his knees like a sack. He was all abroad for an instant and leaned heavily upon his second in returning to his corner, but a whiff of spray braced him. To those who knew Broughton it was a matter for wonder that the butcher recovered from that deadly blow so quickly.

At the eighth round Slack returned once more to his earlier tactics of closing. He got past Broughton's guard at the cost of a stunning clip on the neck, and catching him fairly, whirled him with a mighty effort and sent him spinning on his back. It was a clean, masterly fall, and the amphitheatre thundered with roars of approval, in which the supporters of Broughton joined as heartily as others. For the first time the younger man had clearly proved his right to be in the ring with the master and had won the advantage of a round by skilful tactics. Broughton was in some distress as he arose and sought his corner.

When he came forward for the next round Broughton made a determined effort to land his stomach punch again. Slack clubbed the blow aside with his left arm and in the opening leaped in, planting a terrific smash between eyes. Broughton was shaken and now it was he who closed and sought a fall. In the tenth and eleventh rounds it was still the veteran who rushed quickly for a fall and his friends began to wonder. Not so Cleveland who had noted the sledgehammer blow between the eyes and the anxiety with which the veteran's second treated him.

At the twelfth round Broughton walked forward unsteadily, instead of aiming a blow at his man or trying a clean grip he reached out his arms as if feeling for his adversary. The butcher began to rain face and body blows at will and Broughton gave back, apparently confused. A murmur of uneasiness ran among the spectators. The Duke following his favorite's moves in alarm. Shouted through the quite that had fallen:

"**What's the matter with you Broughton ? you can't fight, you're beat!**"

The veteran was milling desperately, but at random, while the butcher landed almost at will. At the remark of the Duke he answered **"I can't see my man. Your Highness I'm blind, non beat. Only let me see my man and he shall not gain the day yet."** And through the excitement that greeted his words came the triumphant yell of Slack's supporters.

**" He's bunged his peepers."** With a desperate lunge Broughton came to close quarters with the butcher and brought him to the floor, ending a round that had all but defeated him.

### **End of the Mill.**

The effect of Slack's terrible blow was apparent as the veteran was aided to his corner. His flesh, softened through easy ways of life, had puffed and swollen and his eyes were completely closed. The second washed and sprayed his face repeatedly but to no purpose. The champion was blinded. The butcher had indeed "bunged his peepers," But the master was not ready to admit himself beaten. At the calling of time he got up from his second's knee, refusing guidance and walked forward. It, was plain to all, however that he could not find the mark alone, and his second had to spring to his assistance and lead him to his place. There the mighty champion of a hundred battles raised his head proudly, lifted the huge fists that had brought so many stout opponents low and struck out undaunted, still hopeful of wresting the victory that had been his so often.

Slack was merciful and contented himself with wearing out the remaining strength of his adversary. He easily avoided Broughton's wild rushes and none of the swinging blows reached him. he closed in at the first opportunity and bore Broughton heavily to the floor.

it was clear that the battle could not last much longer Once more the gallant Broughton insisted and made upon groping to the center of the ring and once more he summoned his waning strength for the struggle. He panted for breath. His face and body were bathed from a dozen cuts and covered with painful bruises. But he sprang in with lifted fists, forgetful of the terrific punishment, urged by his indomitable spirit. For an instant Slack saw himself threatened He Drew his right hand to his breast and lashed out with the **"Chopper"** a side swing from The elbow. The back of his fist caught the champion under the jaw, Lifting him from his feet, and hurling him headlong. Broughton's second tried to lift him but the beaten Champion sank back with a groan. The umpires solemnly counted the half minutes and at the expiration of the time Broughton still being unable to toe the line, declared Jack Slack the victor.

In the cheers that greeted the new master of the sport as he stood proudly erect Two did not join. One was the duke of Cumberland, who was silent through bitterness , the other was Captain Cleveland, who held his tongue from policy. The Duke, for all his sporting inclination, was not the best loser in the world.

**"I've been sold,"** he declared angrily, as he watched the attendants working over the prostrate form of the conquered man. **"Broughton never fought so poor a battle before."** **"If you will pardon me, Your Highness Said Cleveland, gravely, "this was certainly the bravest and in some ways the best, fight, he ever made. He yielded not to youth in Slack but In age in**

**himself. His defeat has gained him only fresh laurels and we should rather salute and honor him for his rare courage than condemn him for his fair defeat."**

Slack waited until Broughton was able to stand and then shook hands with him with a few manly words.