

YANKEE SULLIVAN AND HAMMER LANE

IN one respect the most remarkable fight in the whole history of the Prize-Ring was an unimportant affair, so far as title or money goes, between Jack Lane, commonly known as "Hammer," and Yankee Sullivan, an East-End Londoner born of Irish parents who had emigrated to America. Lane in training weighed 10 stone 10 lb. He was twenty-six years of age, and hitherto his most considerable battles had been with Owen Swift, whom he beat; and a black man who had taken the celebrated name of Molyneux, and who had beaten him. Sullivan was quite unknown in England. He fought at 11 stone 6 lb., and had stipulated that Lane should not exceed 11 stone. The match was for 50 a side, and took place at Crookham Common, on February 2nd, 1841.

Both the men were in perfect condition. Lane was confident and smiling, Sullivan fiercely serious, as befitted a stranger with his career before him. Very little time was wasted in maneuvering. They came to the scratch, and Sullivan led immediately with his left. Lane guarded the blow and sent in left and right in quick succession, both being stopped. They were boxing well and cleanly, and there was not a penny to choose between them. The ground had been covered with snow which had been perfunctorily swept from the ring itself, but a thaw had set in and the grass was very wet. The first round ended by Lane slipping down.

In the next round Sullivan was in less of a hurry to begin, and waited to see what his opponent would do, and, when Lane hit, stopped him. They met in a rally and exchanged blows equally and Lane slipped down again.

The third round began with a couple of hard lefts from either side, one on Lane's mouth and the other catching Sullivan under the eye. They fought for a minute or so, but Sullivan's blows were very poor, for he hit with his open hand. Then Lane dashed in and threw his arms round his antagonist and fell, his right

arm striking the ground under Sullivan's head. He at once felt a considerable shock. Something had happened, but he didn't dare say even to himself, let alone his seconds, what it was. He went casually to his corner. Both men were now considerably marked. Lane hit out with his left with less confidence than in

the last round, and Sullivan stopped the blow, countering quickly on the mouth. In a rally it was noticed that Lane was guarding as well as hitting with his left, and he did it with remarkable precision. Sullivan aimed a tremendous upper-cut, and Lane jumped back from it, slipping down again as he did so, but rising again at once and going to his corner laughing.

The fifth round was short and equal. At the end Lane closed and threw his man. He came up laughing for the sixth and hit out vigorously. It was going to be all right, he said to himself. No one had seen anything odd yet, and he felt that he was Sullivan's master. He feinted with his left and sent in a very light right on his man's nose and then quickly sent out the left again. Then

Sullivan set his teeth and forced Lane to a corner, and a hard rally began in which Lane hit with both hands. He tried a harder right this time and Sullivan stopped the blow with the point of his elbow. Then at last Lane winced and gave ground. The pain had not been so bad hitherto, but the impact of his antagonist's sharp elbow on his forearm was agonizing. But he was not going to show that he was hurt before he must. He went in again and plugged away at the body with the left. But his right hand dropped to his side, and it was at last plain to the spectators that he had hurt it. But he went to the attack again and again with his left, until Sullivan grabbed hold of it, and closing, threw Lane and fell on him.

What had happened was a rare accident and would have caused nine out of ten men to give in at once and without disgrace. At the end of the third round, as said, Lane threw Sullivan and they came down together with great force, their combined weight falling on Lane's arm, which was beneath his opponent's head.

That fractured the radius, or outer bone of the forearm. At first Lane felt a severe shock, and guessed what had happened, but the pain was not severe until in the sixth round he hit with his right. But when, hitting hard, the blow was stopped by Sullivan's elbow, the pain was exquisite, and his forearm, already swollen, became too painful to hold up. The spectators, and no doubt Sullivan as well, did not know how serious the accident was, but it was patent that Lane had suffered some injury, and Sullivan's friends cheered him on to take advantage of it. Now Lane reckoned to himself that he knew more boxing and could hit harder than his opponent, and that if he could only do it quick enough he could thrash him with one hand. So he went in and smashed Sullivan's face with his left, drawing blood. Blow after blow he sent home much too swiftly for Sullivan to stop, and his cheek and eyebrow were dreadfully cut. Again the American's supporters yelled to him to fight.

"He's only got one arm. Goin go in!"

they shouted. And he accordingly went after Lane, who could only retreat, hitting as he went. Sullivan tried to close, and then Lane slipped down. His backers, seeing, as they imagined, nothing else for it, gathered in Lane's corner and declared that he must give in. Lane laughed the suggestion to scorn. He could beat Sullivan with one hand, he retorted, and utterly refused to throw up the sponge. At the call of time he was laughing again and went straight for his man. This time Sullivan was quicker to guard, and it was some little time before Lane succeeded in landing a blow. The American, to his undying shame, aimed a furious blow at the broken arm. Fortunately he missed, and Lane countered heavily on the body. Then, without moving his feet, he lifted his left twice to the face and hit with all his strength. Sullivan was nearly dazed, and, becoming flustered, missed his own blows, and Lane went down again.

It should be said here that though there was plenty of excuse for his course of action, Lane did continually, after his accident, hit and go down to avoid punishment. The referee, who was Ned Painter, the pugilist, should have been much stricter. A rule is a rule, however much sympathy the breaker of it receives and deserves.

The ninth and tenth rounds found Lane hitting furiously and Sullivan almost maddened with pain. His supporters claimed a foul at the end of the latter round on account of Lane's going

down to avoid a blow, but it was not then, or subsequently, allowed.

And so the fight went on, Lane hitting and hitting again with tremendous power, Sullivan getting much the worst of it, each round ending by Lane's slipping down directly he saw danger. The sympathy of the onlookers was naturally with the injured man, than whom a gamer never went into the ring. In the fourteenth round Sullivan was getting wild, and Lane's heart was high with hope. He drew away, and the American came floundering at him, only to add his own weight to a dreadful straight blow on the eye which knocked him down.

In the sixteenth round Sullivan was almost blind of one eye, but Lane's hitting was now less accurate. The tremendous exertion of hitting with one hand, to say nothing of the pain in his useless right arm and the effort to protect it from further injury, was now telling on him. He missed one blow, and Sullivan, who had been given some oakum on his hands in order that they should remain shut, sent in a terrible right which knocked Lane down. In the next round Lane was hitting again, but got the worst of it. But his courage never faltered, and he came up with all the ardour of a well-trained and unhurt man beginning a battle. Again Sullivan landed heavily and knocked him down. Lane was now bleeding severely from a cut on his eyebrow. And then quite suddenly he weakened. He was looking white and worn out when he came up for the nineteenth round. He hit with a certain amount of vigour still, but could not stop the counter, and Sullivan, hitting him once more on the cut on his brow, knocked him down again. At that, since, though much damaged, Sullivan was evidently strong still and quite steady on his legs, Lane's backers gave in on his behalf. This amazing fight had lasted for thirty-four minutes.

As with Jem Belcher, after his second fight with Tom Cribb, Hammer Lane's chief concern was for his friends and backers who had put their faith in him. After this he did not fight again until 1850, when he had grown stiff and slow, and though Tom Davis, his opponent on that occasion, took over an hour to beat him, he did so decisively.