



Name: Joe Choynski
Career Record: [click](#)
Alias: Chrysanthemum Joe
Nationality: US American
Hometown: San Francisco, CA
Born: 1868-11-08
Died: 1943-01-24
Age at Death: 74

Joseph Bartlett Choynski (coy-en-ski) was one of the outstanding heavyweights at the turn of the 20th century, despite fighting at around 170 pounds. Choynski fought draws with Jim Jeffries, who outweighed him by 50 pounds, and Bob Fitzsimmons. His greatest victory came in 1901 when he knocked out future heavyweight champ Jack Johnson in three rounds.

After the fight the two were arrested for staging an illegal bout. While in jail, Choynski tutored Johnson in many of the tricks of the trade that he had learned. Ironically it was Choynski who helped train Jim Jeffries for his comeback fight against Johnson. In

retirement, Choynski toured with Peter Jackson in a production of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and consulted on the production of the Jim Corbett biopic "Gentleman Jim." Choynski's father was a writer, and his mother a musician.

The Days of Finish Fights **By Joe Choynski**

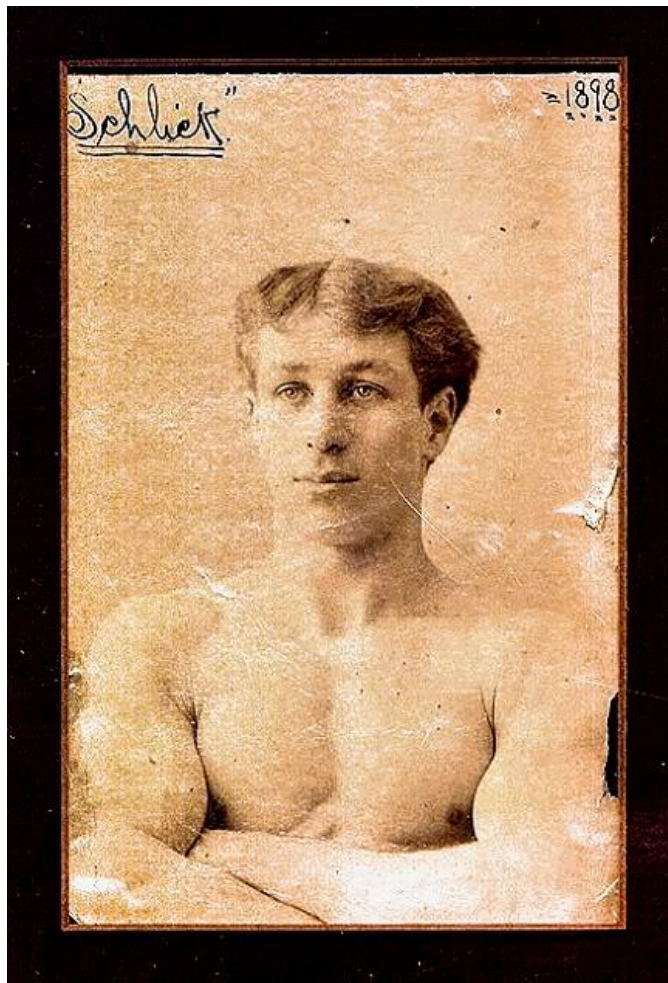
BIG crowds watched me through my training stunts. My bag punching created excitement. The Australians had used only heavy bags. They were, fascinated by the speed and skill I showed with the light bag and in a short time were practicing on their own punching bags Imported from the U.S. The night of the fight came around and I was stripping .in my dressing room when in. walked the "Jawbreaker." "I propose that we save a score," said Fogarty. "I don't get you," says I. Then Fogarty explained that "saving a score" was the Australian way of proposing a loser's end of twenty pounds instead of fighting winner take all, as the articles of agreement stipulated.

I agreed that the loser should have something. The fight with Fogarty went the scheduled ten rounds. I jabbed him almost out and did not receive a scratch in return. The newspapers hailed this victory as a remarkable performance and the Australians were so impressed with my work they sent for Joe Goddard, known as the "Barrier Champion" to come from Melbourne to fight me.

This Goddard was one of the greatest natural fighters I ever saw. Unlike the other Australians he was not clever, but he was fast and prodigiously strong, with a head like a lion. He was almost a glutton for punishment, almost impervious to knockout punches. He was then rated as one of the great heavyweights of the World, on a par with Peter Jackson, Frank Slavin and even John L. Sullivan. In fact I believe that Goddard would have beaten Sullivan then, considering the condition of John L.

This match with Goddard was quickly made and I realized it was my most ambitious undertaking so far Goddard outweighed me by fifty pounds. I finished my training in the hottest weather I ever experienced. The newspapers said the temperature went up at times to 120, and I believe it. It certainly gets hot in Australia in the summer time.

The first round opened at a terrific pace. Before the fight had gone one minute I knocked Goddard down with a blow that split the massive chin. The Australian rings are twenty four feet each way and the referee stands outside the ropes. When Goddard went down, the referee was on the opposite side and he ran all the way around the ring before he began counting. The "Barrier Champion" was on the floor at least six seconds before the count began, and he took the full ten.



Then Goddard began a series of rushes such as I never experienced. Each time he rushed I ducked and his hurtling body would ram with great force against my shoulder or elbow. The referee ordered me not to do this, asserting that it was foul for my shoulder or elbow to collide with Goddard's body. This was a new ruling for me and there was nothing left for me to do but trade wallops with a far heavier man and one of the most dangerous hitters in the world.

The fight became a slaughter. First Goddard would be knocked down and then it would be my turn. Talk about thrills. The crowd was standing from the first exchange. The Sydney referee described the battle as "the most terrible ever seen in Australia." In the fourth round I was knocked out. In my scrap book is a remarkable description of the combat which I wish space permitted to reproduce in full, both for the details it gives of: a memorable battle and to show, the vivid handling of boxing events by Australian, sports writers. I will content myself with the referee's description of the

third round of this battle with Goddard.

"Round 3—Like two whirlwinds the men went at each other and smash, smash with sickening force fell the hailstorm of blows. 'Keep away, Choynski,' yelled some one in the crowd, but he could not, or would not, for. Foley had given the Australian his orders, and he was never to leave his man for a second. Fight for his body, Joe, was Larry's mandate, 'He's slippery with his head.' And well was it for Joe Goddard that, he had the king of seconds at his heels last night, for never in the world did a man need wise counsel in time of desperate need more than did Joe Goddard last night.

"Smash on the point went Choynski's left with a peculiar swing. Chop went his right, and down flop on his knees went Goddard. Then the frantic, furious, maddening struggle sped on, and the men, locked together from sheer exhaustion, swayed like two drunken men, and fell in their tracks all in a heap on the floor. "As they struggled up Goddard was bleeding from nose and mouth and gash over the eye, and Choynski did not show a mark, but his body, neck and side of the head must, have felt as if one of the posts of the gates of hell had fallen upon him.

"Now for a moment it looked as if America had the battle won. Again and again did the plucky lad send home left and right on the iron frame of the giant, but he pegged away in vain. Flesh and blood would have quitted beneath the powerful blows Choynski had landed, but the Barrier man' is iron and road metal, with a heart of steel.

"Once on the ropes there was a fearful rally, and Choynski got his back on them to support himself while trying for a knockout blow. Goddard did then as he did the first night he fought Owen Sullivan he drew back and hurled his gigantic frame upon the slim Tankee lad, and crushed him over, the ropes, and Joe, poor, game, dashing lad, slipped down looking, as if the ribs had been brushed out of him.

"A cry of 'Foul, foul!' was raised, but the fight went on, though now both men were helpless. Neither could lift a hand to deal a blow, and if the fate of the nation had been in the balance then neither would have hurt a child. A few seconds they stood there thus, then the vitality that comes of a vigorous frame and good training, set them on their legs and again they, fought, and to the astonishment of all, Choynski dashed in his left four times hard and banned Joe Goddard so hard with his right that he dropped his hands and stood in the centre of the ring, rocking on his heels with a sickly smile."

Despite my defeat by Goddard, or perhaps because of it, the Australians regarded me with great favor, and offered me a match with Owen Sullivan, another leading heavyweight six feet five inches tall. Sullivan had fought two terrific battles with Goddard. The match was made, and an admirer of mine whose name I cannot now recall, startled the Sydney sports by offering a wager of 300 pounds that I would stop Sullivan in four rounds. The wager was promptly accepted of course.

San Francisco's Own..."Joe Choynski"

by Tony Triem

Born: November 8, 1885, San Francisco, CA

Died: January 25, 1943

Race: Jewish/American

Height: 5' 10"

Weight: 168 lbs



From the Gold Rush days through the turn of the century, San Francisco enjoyed a most distinguished and influential Jewish population. Choynski was one of these men. Coming from an intellectual background, it is difficult to imagine how young Joe, the son of Isador N. Choynski (a raconteur, antiquarian bookman and publisher of "Public Opinion"), could have evolved into such a preeminent world renown boxer-puncher. In one of the world's roughest and toughest businesses, he is undoubtedly the greatest Jewish heavyweight of all time.

San Francisco's Joe Choynski began boxing as an amateur in 1884 and turned professional in 1888. Although he never captured the heavyweight title in his career, he fought eight world champions: John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jim Jeffries, Marvin Hart, Jack Johnson, Joe Walcott and Kid McCoy. He also met such stalwarts as: Joe Goddard, Tom Sharkey, Peter Mahar, Gus Ruhlin, Ed Dunkhurst and Pete Everett. After his match with Choynski, the great champion James J. Jeffries had this to say: "He hit

me so hard, he broke my nose and wedged my lips between my teeth...I have no regrets, I had taken a boxing lesson from a master and an artist."

Years later, after Corbett had been the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, he praised the man with whom he had engaged in more contests than anyone else. "Joe Choynski, in my estimation, was one of the gamest and best fighters that ever lived, though a little bit too light for the heavyweight class. He was really as good as most champions I have seen." Jack Johnson was knocked out in three rounds by Joe Choynski in Galveston on February 25, 1901. Years later, Johnson admitted that the knockout punch was the hardest he ever received.

Joe Choynski was not a brutal fighter. He achieved knockouts by skill and science. Brutality was

against his nature. A sister-in-law, Mrs. Edwin Coe, described him fondly as a “kindly, soft-hearted, truly great personality whom everyone called a marvelous man.” She remembered his “handsome slenderness and his compassionate blue eyes.” He retained his comely appearance throughout the twenty years of his boxing career.

Not only was Joe a reader and a truly literate person, he was also known as a collector of antiques. When asked the secret of his longevity, he said it was important to retire early each night, abstain from tobacco and intoxicating liquor. In later years, Joe went back to school and graduated as a chiropractor. He also spent many long hours at the Young Men’s Hebrew Association teaching youngsters the fine art of boxing.

Choynski died on January 25, 1943 and was survived by his wife Louise, a former actress and member of a non-Jewish Cincinnati family. Although he never held a title, he was nevertheless a ‘TRUE CHAMPION.’

15 January 1927
by Joe Choynski

OWEN SULLIVAN was not only of gigantic proportions, but he was one of the clever boxers of the Larry Foley school. My friend who wagered I would stop. Sullivan in four rounds was considered "balmy," and I confess I believed. he had acted rashly. But I knocked Sullivan out in the first round with a punch to the ribs. He had to be carried from the ring and we were afraid he was going to die. It was a week before he could leave his bed.

Still believing I could beat Goddard, I asked for a return match, and the Barrier Champion consented. The second meeting was held at Melbourne and was almost a repetition of the first. Goddard again beat me in four rounds of desperate fighting. Again I came, against the referee's ruling prohibiting me from "striking" Goddard with my shoulders and elbows when his body collided with me as I ducked.

While it does not belong at this point to tell about it, I think it fair to record here that I met Goddard a third time, two years later at Philadelphia, with an American referee, and gave him a bad beating in six rounds! In that contest Goddard did not lay a glove on me.

Despite my two defeats by Goddard the Australians rated me as a. great fighter. In that country a defeated man is not thrown in the discards. I like several other characteristics of the Australians. For example, after I knocked out Owen Sullivan I went but to the race track the next day and was nearly floored when .strangers would introduce themselves to, me and tell me they won on me and offer to divide their winnings with me. Who ever heard, of such a thing in America?.

Another delightful custom, was the way they paid over the stakes. A banquet was held the day after the fight, to which the principals their seconds, managers and members of the press were invited. Complimentary things were said, and the fighters were given their money.

One day In Melbourne I was sitting In a popular oyster house conducted by .Jack Warner, a well-to-do Australian sporting character. Suddenly I heard a fearful, uproar accompanied by a crash of

broken glass. I looked around and saw a man riding through the front door on a horse. I was amazed to recognize the rider as Duncan Harrison, manager of John L. Sullivan, who was then touring Australia with his melodrama, "Honest Hearts and Winning Hands."

Harrison was arrested for drunkenness and fined the customary, Australian "seven and six," meaning 7 shillings, 6 pence, equivalent in American money to about \$1.85. The Sullivan show was a flop in Australia. The Australians are lovers of art and patrons of the drama, but the spectacles of Sullivan playing the role of a poor blacksmith whose family was threatened with eviction from home—Sullivan dressed in silk shirt, black velvet pants, silk hose and wearing big diamonds—was too much for their critical Judgment.

I was next matched with Mick Dooley; cleverest of all Larry Foley's pupils. Dooley had also fought Goddard's two hard fights, losing the last in 18 hard rounds. Dooley had also fought hard battles with Frank Slavin, then generally regarded as the equal of Goddard. Dooley weighed only 168 pounds, and was the first man of my own weight I had met. But Dooley's wonderful skill was not much greater than my own by that time, for I had profited by my study of the boxing of Australians, adapting much of it to my American knowledge. I knocked Dooley cold in the first Round.

My last public appearance in Australia was in an exhibition bout with Steve O'Donnell, another remarkably clever boxer, 6 feet 2 inches tall; who afterward became Jim Corbett's sparring partner. Steve had every natural advantage except courage. The next day I ran into John L. Sullivan on the street and he invited me into an ale house to have a drink. He told me he was tired of the poor patronage his show had attracted and suggested that, as I was about to return home, we book passage on the same ship. I readily agreed. Just before I departed for home after 14 months in Australia, a banquet was given for me at Melbourne, and I was presented by the sports of Melbourne with a silk purse containing 200 sovereigns.

The Sydney Referee, of which Bill Corbett (no relation to Jim) was editor, gave me a fine eulogy in the issue of that week. This was written by Smiler Hale, able boxing authority in Australia, perhaps - in the entire world. The articles contained more compliments for me than I care to quote.

A great crowd was at the pier to bid farewell to John L. Sullivan and myself as we sailed for America, where I had in store for me more important fighting than I dreamed of at that time. I was to fight such great men of the ring as Jeffries, Fitzsimmons, Sharkey three times, Kid McCoy three times, Peter Maher three times, Jack Johnson, Jim Hall twice, Denver Ed Smith, Geo. Godfrey, Gus Ruhlin, Joe McAuliffe, Dan Creedon and Joe Walcott—to name only the more prominent—and a whole army of lesser-known, fighters.

Each of these fights was a real battle full of drama and action. I believe the story as told by one of the participants will be decidedly interesting to lovers of sports. Many interesting details of these battles, such as flings, of repartee in the ring, have never been told. In subsequent articles I will endeavor to recall these events of a bygone generation

ROUGH HOUSE

those saw the moving pictures of the Jeffries-Johnson fight will remember that Jeffries scarcely tried to lead. Several times when he came to his corner I pleaded with him to try something. He's hitting you plenty Jeff. I said. "He's cutting you up, you might as well lead at him" and Jeff would say "Yes that's right, I'll go after him next round". But there was no spirit in his words and he would continue on the defensive.

But there is one memory of that Battle that I cherish with some satisfaction and that is that Johnson was frightened nearly to death in the first three rounds. "it took him three to wake up to the fact that :Jeff was not going to bite his head off, was incapable of putting up a fight, and then Johnson sailed in to punch. The once mighty Jeffries into complete helplessness.

Tom Sharkey and I met for a shindig in "San Francisco in 1898. Those who regard Sharkey as a rough-and-tumble fighter without cunning have another thing coming. Sailor Tom was about as canny a bruiser as ever rubbed resin on his soles. He was as cunning as Kid McCoy.

I had seen Sharkey almost murder Jim Corbett with his rough house style. He had Corbett beat when the referee stopped the affair. Jim was so weary he had to sit in his corner a long time before he could make a start for his dressing room. I had also seen Sharkey knocked out in eight rounds by Bob Fitzsimmons's Only to have the decision awarded to Sharkey on a foul by the illustrious Referee , "Wyatt Earp " The only foul Thing about that was the decision. Fitz afterwards got his revenge by beating the sailor almost to death in two rounds.

But trusting Joe thought nothing could be handed to him in his home town. George Green, known to the sporting world as Young Corbett, was to have been my chief second, and when he did not show up on the night of the fight I thought it rather strange. The referee was to be picked at the ringside. I will connect these two facts in a moment.

Sharkey was already in his corner when I climbed through the ropes. Later I learned that Tom remarked when he saw me: "He looks like a sheep" to which "Spider" Kelly, his second, replied, "and he kicks like a mule."

Sharkey had not received a warm welcome from the crowd. recollections of his affair with Fitzsimmons and his tactics with Corbett had left a bad taste in the mouth and there were more hoots than cheers for him. A long wrangle ensued over the selection of a referee, Sharkey pretended to be terribly suspicious and uneasy. The names of Peter Jackson. Jim McDonald and Dan O'Leary were suggested but none was acceptable to Sharkey. In fact, not a single suggested suited Sharkey.

Finally someone in the gallery in a loud voice yelled, "How about Wyatt Earp?" and hardly had the hisses, and groans subsided when another wag called out: "I suggest Sharkey's brother This caused a laugh, but the wrangle went on. The crowd began to whistle "Home, Sweet Home." An hour passed and Eddie Graney, my chief second, proposed that the newspapermen name the arbiter. This suggestion was refused by Sharkey also.

All the while . I was sitting in. my corner wondering just what made Sharkey so suspicious.

Suddenly some one yelled, "How about George Green" and instantly it was announced that Sharkey had accepted Green. I smelled a rat. but being weary from the wrangle and confident I could knock Sharkey out, I offered no objection.

The bell rang, and then began one of the craziest exhibitions ever staged In a prize-ring. Talk about a mixed match of wrestling and boxing, it was there. A spectator could not have told whether it was Queensberry or London Prize Ring rules or, whether we were boxing, wrestling or using Jiu jitsu. Sharkey committed every kind of Io-«i5 Imaginable except biting.

I did not want the fight on a foul and I offered little protest against Sharkey's tactics. I was more rugged than Corbett and felt I could stand a lot of the wrestling and mauling ,while waiting a chance to flatten Sharkey with a punch. In fact the audience did much more complaining about Sharkey's rough work than did my seconds. But as the battle went on the sailors work got more and more crude and my strength was gradually sapped. In the eighth round I began to tire from the furious pace Suddenly Sharkey. who was much the heavier man, rushed me to the ropes and then deliberately flung me bodily out of the ring. My head struck a chair corner as I fell to the floor and I had to be assisted back, into the ring. To the surprise of the crowd referee Green walked to the centre of the ring, and yelled: "It's a draw."

Commenting on this decision, W. Naughton, the boxing, authority of that .day, observed.:- "In a contest such as last nights there should have been a clean-cut decision. Sharkey's work was rough and damaging whether intentional! or not Either he should have lost the fight on a foul or he should have been hailed as the winner."

Among the notables at the ringside were John L. Sullivan, Bob Fitzsimmons. Jim Corbett and Kid McCoy. The truth of the matter, as I see It clearly after these years, is that I gave away too much weight to an extraordinarily powerful man who used the rough house tactics habitual to Sharkey I was overconfident to the Point of recklessness in match making. It was folly enough to concede so much weight to giants who fought fairly, but when I had to endure the mauling, heeling, gouging, butting and general slamming around of by Sharkey it was too much.

Joe Choynski - Vintage Original Holograph Letter from Joe Choynski to Nat Fleischer, Editor and Publisher of The Ring - 11-11-1939

Joe Choynski's offers his views on the Mace v. Donovan Benefit fight and Mike Donovan in particular and the John L. Sullivan...

"...Donovan who thought that I was the greatest ever offered to pay my expenses and give me another \$100 to second him"...

"...when I ask him for my expenses he told me a hard luck tale and ran out on me? A lie detector can prove my assertion. When I first started to box a man told me one you could only trust a boxer as far as you could sling a bull by the tail ? and was he right..."

Sullivan boxed Donovan and grabbed John around the waist fearful of his right and John hit him on the back - flattened him and every man he fought thereafter he did the same thing until Corbett go

He thought Mace was trying to get his job?

On Jem Mace... "...that Mace could not box but he insisted so I intimidated Mace before the event talked to him psychologically and agitated his nerves..."

"...I told Mike remember he does not know how to hook left hand; collect yourself and lead for stomach his left will go over your head and he did just that and found himself. I had to admonish him that Mace was 72 years old or more. Mace had to remove his false uppers..."

and the solar plexus punch... "there is no solar plexus punch. The plexus is behind stomach a bundle of nerves. Fitz punched Corbett in liver . I taught it to Bat Nelson, ask him."

Joe Choynski has his dates confused, the benefit exhibition between Mike Donovan and Jem Mace took place on 14 December 1896. Choynski fought Jem Hall on 20 January 1896. Choynski was present at the benefit according to contemporary press accounts and he was correct that the benefit was held at the Broadway Athletic Club.

I look towards you. Cincinnati O - Nov 11-39

I attended some bouts last week Buddy Knox and Pross. (November 8, 1939 at Cincinnati Ohio.) Pross a protege of Dempsey? ...was out in two rds..wherever they get the idea they can box? Ben Leonard was referee of () bouts. did OK.

December Ring your Mr. Phillips speaks of Donovan and Mace meeting at London Theatre on the Bowery. I think he errs. I fought Jim Hall Australia in N.Y. Donovan had me at club NYA a few days before event to spar his pupils? after I beat Hall Donovan asked me to second him against Mace who had returned to America on a trip around the world. Al Smith's renowned racing man, a book living in hotel corner of 34th Donovan named me and Parson Davies promoted a benefit for Mace and Donovan. Donovan who thought that I was the greatest ever offered to pay my expenses and give me another \$100 to second him. He thought Mace was trying to get his job? I told him he was foolish, that Mace could not box but he insisted so I intimidated Mace before the event talked to him psychologically and agitated his nerves. they met in Old Broadway A.C. instead of London- Broadway near B.oone looking on Wash. Sq? I was want to live in hotel next door. The Colonade? the first round and Mace landed his left unexpectedly early on Mike's nose End 2 min on return to corner. I told Mike remember he does

not know how to hook left hand; collect yourself and lead for stomach his left will go over your head and he did just that and found himself. I had to admonish him that Mace was 72 years old or more. Mace had to remove his false uppers. two rounds no decision. The both received \$1,300. Mace cried when the promoter refused to take part of his money, Donovan counted all the tickets? and when I ask him for my expenses he told me a hard luck tale and ran out on me? A lie detector can prove my assertion. When I first started to box a man told me one you could only trust a boxer as far as you could sling a bull by the tail ? and was he right, wish I could get to N.Y. Sullivan boxed Donovan and grabbed John around the waist fearful of his right and John hit him on the back - flattened him and every man he fought thereafter he did the same thing until Corbett go If you have date of my contests the between Donovan and Mace occurred when I beat Jim Hall

There is no solar plexus punch. The plexus is behind stomach a bundle of nerves. Fitz punched Corbett in liver . I taught it to Bat Nelson, ask him.

The following is from the October 1930 issue of 'Fight Stories', a great old pulp style boxing magazine that was published from 1928 to the 1950's. They always seemed to include at one great biographical feature in each issue:

‘ I Fought ‘Em All’ as told by Tom Lewis by Joe Choynski

“Some men are born to preach. Others are born to teach. Still others are born to dream. But I was born to fight. I was born Joseph Bartlett Choynski, in San Francisco, California, November 8, 1868, and for eighteen years of the sixty-one so far spent in this world, I met and battled the iron men of the ring.

Who were these men? Well, the records show that they were among the best in the world. Among others, I fought Jim Corbett, Joe Goddard, Jack Johnson, Kid McCoy, Dan Creedon, Joe McAuliffe, Tom Sharkey, Peter Maher, Bob Fitzsimmons and Jim Jeffries. No one of these famous men of Fisticiana was rated as a walk-over or an easy setup.

More than once, my fate trembled in the balance and I was very, very close to championships. But fate is a tricky jade. She plays many strange pranks.

Eddie Graney, the famous old San Franciscan, who recently passed to his reward, has called me the best educated pugilist in the world. Perhaps this isn't literally true, but it speaks well of my environment, and affords me an opportunity to laud my father and mother.

My father was I.N. Choynski, a native of Poland. He was an educated man, a fluent writer and talker, and he was Collector of the Port during Abraham Lincoln's administration.

His friends and intimates included Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Joaquin Miller and Bob Ingersoll. These men and other celebrities, including famous actors, were frequent guests in my father's home. My mother, a gifted woman of English birth, entertained them royally. I knew them well.

My mother, incidentally, was one of a group of twelve girls who comprised the first graduating

class in a California high school. Possibly this explains, in a measure, the statement of Eddie Graney as to my own education. Who could help getting an education with parents of this caliber?

As a boy, I was tall and slender – with a mop of blonde hair. This was always flopping. It gave me a wild appearance and thus hung on me the sobriquet of “Chrysanthemum Joe.” This clung to me through life.

I can’t remember when I had my first fight. But, if you know anything at all about old San Francisco, you must understand that we were always fighting. First, we battled for the championship of our block. Next we fought to see which kid would be the king-pin of his school. Ultimately, of course, we had gang fights.

There was jealousy and keen competition. You fought well, or you didn’t. and, if you didn’t, well, that was just too bad. You took a licking as often as a seal takes a bath.

My mother hated fighting. But I didn’t. I loved it. Like Bob Fitzsimmons, I acquired most of my strength in a blacksmith shop; also in a candy factory, by rolling and carrying 300 pound barrels of sugar up three flights of stairs. Then, too, I did a lot of “pulling” on fifty-pound batches of gooey candy. If those things won’t develop a man’s back, legs, and arms, nothing will! Hence, my punch.

But, in spite of all this, I knew little or nothing of real fighting when I had my first clash with James J. Corbett. Corbett, on the other hand, was even then regarded as a wizard. He was fast, as light and keen as a razor.

Naturally, there was rivalry between us, for I had my following, and Jim had his. We were born to clash.

One day, like a bolt from the blue, I got an invitation from Corbett. He wanted me to come to the Corbett livery-stable for a little set-to. History was in the making.

Up to this time, I had never seen Corbett. He had been tutored at the exclusive Olympic Club under the watchful eye of Walter Watson, an excellent boxing instructor who had come to California from England. I had been tutored in the streets and on the sandlots. There is plenty of difference. I accepted Corbett’s invitation. I went to the stable accompanied by my brother Maurice.

Corbett and I started boxing, there in the stable, among the horses, and it didn’t take me long to tumble that he had me stumped as far as science goes. We fought with bare knuckles.

Corbett’s speed dazzled me. He moved like a flash of lightning. The first round was fast as thought. Before the initial session was over I realized I would have to pick up many pointers if I hoped to hold my own with Corbett. He danced around that stable like an apparition.

He gave me a boxing lesson for two rounds. I was busier than a bird-dog. When I wasn’t ducking

Corbett, I was trying to doge the flying heels of the excited horses. There was no referee and no decision. But I gave Corbett credit for out-boxing me. We shook hands and parted. But I knew there was going to be bad blood between us. Trouble was brewing.

It wasn't long developing. My brother Maurice worked at the City Hall. So did Corbett's brother Harry. They took up the feud. Maurice issued a challenge to Corbett through Harry. It was arranged that we should meet at the Dog Pound.

I went to the Dog Pound with Maurice and Frank Nichols. Corbett was there. And he had eight or ten members of his Hayes Valley "gang" with him. This didn't look so good.

Jack Gallagher was timekeeper. There was no referee. We went into it – with bare knuckles.

Again I was dazzled by Corbett's speed. That lightening-like left of his tapped my beezzer before I could think. His feet were twinkling like a tap dancer's. Blows came so fast I couldn't begin to dodge them. I stopped plenty.

Bank! This is a left to my chin. Bam! That is a left to my nose! Smack! Another left to my eye! Corbett kept repeating the dose.

Then, with no secret hope that I could even land the lick, I started a mighty heave for Corbett's head. It landed, biff! on his temple – and Corbett toppled to the ground. That thrilled me!

Instantly, Gallagher called "time." But here my friend Frank Nichols set up a yell: "Run, Joe – you and Maurice – you've got no chance here now!" I knew he referred to Corbett's gang. After that knockdown of their favorite, I wouldn't have even a dog's chance, here in the Dog Pound.

So Maurice and I started to pull out. But here Corbett jumped up. He was sore as a goat. He paid no attention to me. He leaped at Maurice. "You're responsible for this!" he yelled, and then he handed poor Maurice a peach of a wallop on the nose! To this day, I don't know why he took it out on my brother.

Well, I wasn't faring so badly. First, I met Corbett among the horses – and he outpointed me. Next, I tangled with him among the dogs – and knocked him down. And this paved the way for our third meeting.

And this was to be a regular club – with gentleman present – and everything!

Corbett had been matched to box Joe McAuliffe, the famous Mission Giant at the Olympic. There was a hitch somewhere, and the bout was called off. I was asked by Corbett to take the place of the Mission Giant – appear before the gents – in tights and everything.

This made me laugh. I told Corbett I had never been in a ring, and that I owned no tights. Corbett said he'd get me a pair. And he did. But he got 'em so tight I was afraid to bend. They were three sizes too small for the present Battling Battalino.

Corbett was well seconded. He had Billy Delaney and Walter Watson in his corner. They provided no seconds for me.

I guess Corbett made a monkey of me for the first two rounds. His speed was indecent. I didn't know it then, but I realized later that I was in there against the fastest thing in heavyweights that the ring has ever developed.

That left hook shook me repeatedly for two or three rounds. Then, feeling pretty sure that Corbett couldn't stow me away, I sailed in and cut loose with everything I had.

I forgot the swell club, ignored the clustered gentlemen and the influence of Corbett, and pegged away at him for all I was worth. I kept this up for the third, fourth and fifth rounds. We had agreed to box five rounds. We did – and although Corbett knocked me down, I doubted whether he could knock me out. I was strong, but untrained, I guess I fooled him.

Corbett was, of course, in perfect condition. He had been training every day – often spending hours on the development of one punch – while I knew nothing of gyms, and spent my time wielding a sledge hammer and wrestling with 300-pound sugar barrels. So I was pretty badly winded when we finished the five-round bout at the Olympic. There was no referee, but I agreed that Corbett outpointed me.

Out in the shower-room, where I sat blowing a little, some fellow poked his head in the door and pitched a pair of five-dollar gold pieces on the floor at my feet. I had never seen the man before.

Then Corbett came in. He asked: *“Did Brown give you some money?”*

I showed him the gold coins. Corbett grabbed one of the fives. “Half of it is for me,” he snapped, and I let it go at that. But there was a queer aftermath to this bit of business. It was one of those quirks of fate I mentioned in the beginning. Odd, how those things bob up!

These preliminary skirmishes with Corbett taught me a number of things. For the first time, I began to see the real possibilities in scientific boxing. Corbett himself was far advanced along those lines.

I therefore began a determined effort to master some of the finer points of the game. Up to this time, I had relied on my amazing strength and fine recuperative powers. Now I began an earnest study of footwork. I developed my left. I paid closer attention to feinting and countering. But of course, I was far from perfect. I had no shrewd trainers such as Corbett had.

Then the Golden Gate Athletic Club staged a tournament for amateurs. I weighed less than 150 pounds but entered the heavyweight class just the same. I won with the greatest ease.

Later I met and defeated such promising heavies as Jack McCauley, Pat O'Sullivan, Jim Hall (colored) and a fellow they called “The Tipton Slasher.”

Now they matched me with Billy (“Forty”) Kenneally. He was Corbett's sparring partner. He

weighed 180 pounds and was hard as Bessemer steel.

I was to meet Kenneally in an amateur inter-club tournament – but imagine my feelings when club officials called me on the carpet. My amateur standing had been challenged. This fellow Brown was there, though I didn't recognize him until someone asked:

“Mr. Choynski, didn't a man named Brown give you money for boxing Corbett at the Olympic?”

I replied: “A man I didn't know threw two five-dollar gold pieces into the shower-room, but Jim Corbett came in and took one of them!”

This stopped them cold. Their phony objections vanished like magic.

So I went after the 180-pound Kenneally. I thought I was going to have a cinch. But those are the fights that fool you. It was a dog-fight; the rough-and-tumble Kenneally almost scoured the chrysanthemum off my dome before I got going good. He pounded me to the floor in the opening round and when I got up I was reeling like a merry-go-round. But I weathered the storm, and we slugged it out until the fourth. Then I nailed Kenneally with a left that was reminiscent of the blacksmith shop. Whereupon, Corbett's big sparring partner dropped out for the night. They didn't have to count over him. What they needed was smelling salts.

Then, oddly, as such things happen, I went professional. But I was full of ice cream and cake, not to mention port wine imbibed at a wedding, and it all happened so suddenly that I scarcely knew how the trick was turned. Eddie Graney was with me at the time. But he knew nothing of the affair. I think he was even more surprised than I was.

Eddie Graney and I had gone downtown to see a fight between Ed Cuffe, of Buffalo, and George Bush, the Maine Giant. Bush, who stood six feet three inches tall, had come to the Golden Gate to condition George Godfrey for a battle with the great Peter Jackson.

Graney and I waited for the two giants to appear. But there was a delay. Suddenly the announcer yelled:

“I am sorry, but there has been a hitch in the arrangements. Ed Cuffe has a poisoned hand, and the club physician will not allow him to go on with this fight.”

There was bitter disappointment. Part of the crowd began booing. But others demanded: “A substitute. Get a good man and give us a fight!”

Eddie Graney looked at me. “But where'll they find a substitute?” he demanded. “There's nobody-“

I jumped up. “Oh, yes, there is!” I said, and, on the spur of the moment, I agreed to turn professional and take on a man as big as a piano-box!

They thought I was crazy, and I suppose I was a little balmy at the moment, but I had made my

announcement and I meant to stick to it. The crowd ate this up. The sportsmen gave me a rousing cheer as I started for the dressing rooms. They hated disappointments as much as I did. I've always hated them.

Well, here we were in our corners – and I felt somewhat of a thrill. Yes, and I felt a little guilty, too! My first professional fight! What an hour that was!

Then the wedding we had attended rose up to taunt me and I thought, with horror, of the cake, ice-cream and port wine in my stomach!

“This fight,” I said to myself with considerable conviction, “has got to end quickly. If that giant ever hits me in the lunch – good-bye wedding feast!”

The Maine Giant looked terribly big, standing over there, big and hairy, and full of fight. I guess he rated me as a joke, a skinny little apparition, to be pushed over with a wave of the hand.

The bell banged, and we went at it. Bush must have been in a hurry. He began rushing me and plastered my chrysanthemum with sledge-hammer rights. One caught me on the beezers and the claret was flowing freely. A fierce yell went up.

But I had enough red-ink on board to satisfy all the customers. I took four swats to give one. Then I laced the giant's bread basket, swarmed him against the ropes, and was beating him like a drum as the gong rang. The crowd was wild. I could hear 'em roaring like Yosemite Falls.

Two minutes then sufficed to finish the task I had set myself when I hopped up and proclaimed myself a professional. After some of the hottest and fastest milling of my whole ring career, I found the giant's whiskers with a sugar-barrel right and he decided the unpadded floor was the right spot for him. He didn't get up until long after the cheering subsided.

For prostrating this mammoth I received the purse of \$900. But the fans were so tickled with my demonstration they insisted on passing the hat. This netted me \$760 more. When I went home and showed my mother all this wealth, she scolded me. I think she wanted to cry, for it seemed terrible to her for me to become a fighter; but I consoled her and eventually she was reconciled to the idea.

Next came the case of Frank Glover, of Chicago. He had come West in the confident belief that he could whip the terrible Joe McAuliffe, the Mission Giant. And he made a pretty fair stab at it, too, for it took McAuliffe forty-nine rounds to stop him.

Then they offered Glover a consolation match – with me as the consoler. Glover was a big man, and a good one, but I was putting all I had into my professional fights – blacksmith sledges, sugar-barrel wedges, candy-pulling muscles, and everything. As it turned out, there was not much consolation in the match for our Chicago friend.

But I made a mistake in the opening round. I hit Glover too hard. Or I didn't hit him hard enough. I don't know which. Anyway, I knocked him clear through the ropes and into the laps of

the customers. They hoisted him back, after some difficulty and a lapse of time, and after this he covered up like a crafty gopher when the cats are stalking the fields. So, for the ensuing rounds, I had to risk breaking my hands in an effort to convince him that the consolation was something different, after all.

Still, I knocked him out in thirteen rounds, whereas it required forty-nine for the Mission Giant to topple him. And for thus consoling Glover I received \$1,750 – and the boys began calling me the best man on the West Coast. Jim Corbett didn't like this, and it was this jealousy that led to my finish fight with him. He had boxed Mike Cleary and Jack Burke at the Olympic Club, where he had inveigled me into boxing an exhibition with him and then tried to knock me out, and failed.

So when I had won a reputation, Corbett challenged me. Upon my acceptance, the California Club offered us \$20,000 to fight to a finish. He refused, and would only agree to fight me in private! And for \$1,000 a side!

Here we have one of the most striking situations that has ever bobbed up in the annals of American pugilism.

“Joe Choynski,” said a writer, “the toughest and gamest little man in the fighting game, is going to fight Jim Corbett, one of the greatest of boxers, for \$1,000, when he could have twenty times this amount. What sort of business do you call this?”

Many people, including the leading sports writers and the world's best fighters, asked the same question. But I have given you the facts. It was Corbett and not I, who refused to fight in a regular club for that unheard of purse of \$20,000.

Why?

Hasn't it ever struck you as odd that Corbett and Choynski should fight in private, running the risk of arrest and prosecution, when they could have had ample club protection and twenty thousand dollars for the winners?

Well, it was queer, whether you've ever thought about it or not, and I think I can give you the real reason. It didn't strike me then, but it does now. And here it is! I am convinced that Corbett wanted to make sure that I had no possible chance to win!

There was a certain saying current in San Francisco at that particular time. This saying was that two men might fight “win, tie, or wrangle.”

In other words, if a man's friends and backers found a fight going against their favorite, they would break it up in a row – a free-for-all wrangle – with the usual consequences. Anything could happen under those circumstances.

But in a regular club, with supervision and everything, the “win, tie, or wrangle” racket wasn't so good. And nobody knew this better than Corbett.

However, I agreed to meet Corbett at any time or any place. To avoid possible police interference, we consented to keep the rendezvous secret. There was a side bet of \$1,000.

I wanted skin-tight gloves. But Corbett insisted on two-ounce gloves. They tossed a coin for it. Corbett called the turn, and got his two-ounce gloves. Then an argument arose as to the number of spectators we would tolerate. I narrowed it down to ten men on each side.

But where to hold the fight? Everybody in San Francisco knew about the grudge. How could we escape them? Finally we agreed upon a barn at Fairfax, a picnic grounds across the bay from San Francisco. Corbett trained at the Olympic. It was here that he had boxed with Nonpareil Jack Dempsey.

I did my little work at Sausalito. It was agreed that Eddie Graney and Jack Dempsey should be my seconds.

Nat C. Goodwin, famous as an actor and sportsman, was one of my strongest supporters. He was appearing in the Baldwin Theatre in San Francisco. That is, he was appearing there until May 30, 1889. This day – Decoration Day – was the date of our fight. And that day Nat Goodwin refused to work. Instead he sent a telegram.

“Taken seriously ill. Cannot appear today. Dismiss the matinee audience.”

So, the manager of the Baldwin had to make a certain speech to his big audience, and then refund their money. Nat couldn't be bothered with theaters when a real prizefight was on the boards. And he gave the messenger a fifty-dollar tip for taking his telegram to San Rafael, to be sent from there to San Francisco.

At this point, it is interesting to note the differences between the contestants in this, the strangest fight ever pulled off in America – a finish fight between two men of our class – with absolutely no “gate”!

What a wow Tex Rickard could have made of this one!

I was twenty years old and weighed 155. Corbett was twenty-two and outweighed me fifteen pounds, possibly more. Although we had limited the “crowd” to twenty men, ten on a side, fully one hundred crept through the dawn toward the barn at Fairfax.

The time was set for six o'clock. There had been a lot of wrangling, and I think it was nearer ten

o'clock before we struck the first blow.

Patsy Hogan, the pugilist, was referee. The timekeeper was T.T. Williams.

Corbett, looking debonair as usual, turned pink when he saw Jack Dempsey in my corner. He hadn't figured on that.

But he quickly recovered his nerve and offered to bet Dempsey \$500 he could whip me. Mose Gunst backed me for \$1,000. The Olympic Club backed Corbett.

At last, with the hay pushed back in the dusty loft, we sprang to the center of the ring and began the opening scenes in the strangest fistic drama this nation has ever recorded.

We came together like wildcats released from the leash. Corbett had "kneaded" his gloves until the knuckles were almost bare. I could feel his hard, bony hands against my face.

I crashed a hard right to his head, and then scoured his ribs with lefts. We clinched, parted swiftly, and then exchanged long, looping punches that cut and scarred.

All around us, there was the low hum of excited voices. Here, in the misty barn, were the two dandies of Market Street – the fashioned-plates of the Golden Gate – determined to cut each other to ribbons because of a grudge. And our partisans were there to cheer us on!

I have heard some men say that a grudge fight is the bunk. That nothing ever happens. Well, it wasn't that way with this grudge fight. All the rivalry, all the bitterness, all the imaginary grievances were aired and magnified. It was a grim business, a finish match, to be fought out in sweat, in blood and in agony.

Corbett hit me. And I hit Corbett. Up to this time, men of San Francisco had never seen Corbett's face marred. But I marred it. And he marred mine.

The crowd, for the most part, was fairly quiet. But Corbett's partisans grew noisy as he began landing more often. And once, when he floored me briefly, they roared right out. Whereupon Nat Goodwin scored them roundly.

"Do you want the sheriff on us?" he demanded. "Keep still, you idiots, Choynski will give him plenty!"

In the first round honors were fairly even. It was give and take. We both bled. In the second I took a short fall. I was up quickly and feeding Corbett that right.

The third saw us mixing it a bit more furiously. I fancy Corbett was amazed at my improvement.

But, grudge or not grudge, we kept joshing each other. I would tell Corbett where to hit me – then try to make him miss. He would dance around me, in that tantalizing way of his, and dare me to land a blow on his chin. And I did. With returns!

Here, however, I want to dispel a common error. I have heard men say that Jim Corbett could not hit effectively. Jim Corbett had plenty of punishing power. He could hit a man and make it hurt. But he was always extremely cautious. He was like Tommy Ryan in that respect.

Corbett, while never a punishing socker like Sullivan, Fitzsimmons or Maher, was able to deliver some very effective blows. Yet he was unwilling to take a chance. He never tore in and risked things. It was this extreme caution that lost him his memorable battle with Fitzsimmons.

The fourth round in the barn found us socking away to a fare-thee-well when there came a sudden commotion. The man on the door was shoved aside. An authoritative voice began bellowing loudly:

“I’m the Sheriff of Marin County.”

Then the sheriff, mumbling apologetically, stumbled up the stairs and informed us that the battle was over.

But it wasn’t over. The grudge had not been satisfied. Not enough blood had been spilled. We were to meet again – when we could find a spot free from molestation by the police.

My next dramatic, and final, meeting with Corbett was staged a week later on a grain barge belonging to Tom Williams, Corbett’s wealthy backer. The barge shoved her snub nose into the Straits of Carquinez, and there, tossing in the water and with the California sun blazing down on us, we battled it out to a finish.

Eddie Graney, that rare old sportsman who had viewed every fight of any prominence over a period of forty-five years, wrote:

“That fight on the barge, between Choynski and Corbett, was the greatest battle I ever saw. No two men alive today could even hope to duplicate it.”

We arrived in the little town of Benicia after nightfall on the fourth of June. We were to meet on the barge at sunrise the next day. I went to bed early, but not to sleep, for I kept thinking of the fight. I was working out a plan to beat Corbett.

I arose early. I thought I knew exactly what I was going to do. But, sad to relate, fighters often listen to the advice of others.

By 6:30 a.m., we were on the rough flooring of the barge. Jack Dempsey and Eddie Graney were with me again. Corbett had Watson and Delaney.

We were hemmed in by a wall of sixty men. Soon the barge was out in the bay. No fear of police interference. The time had come for Choynski and Corbett to settle their differences. Once man would emerge the victor. The other man would be battered into insensibility. Which would it be?

At 6:48 a.m., time was called. Patsy Hogan again refereed.

Corbett, twenty pounds heavier and considerably taller, immediately began his tricky maneuvers. He kept working me around so that the bright morning sun would be fully in my eyes.

Then he swung down on me, reaching for ribs and mouth, but I began driving my left at his head and heart. We hit hard, with no thought of the small bones in our hands, and time and again we injured those delicate bones.

The crowd was deathly still. There wasn't much sound – only the sloshing of the water and the terrible impact of the gloves. It was grim business.

Back in my corner Nonpareil Jack Dempsey began drumming it into me that I must keep away from Corbett. This was the wrong thing to say. No fighting man ever received worse advice from another.

I went out, at the beginning of the second, determined to follow instructions and fight cautiously. That was what the Nonpareil insisted I should do. But in my heart I felt that Dempsey was wrong.

Then strangely, Corbett and I suddenly began joshing each other again. As the blows thudded and the blood flowed we set up a current of banter that continued for many rounds.

As Corbett would launch a blow he'd yell: "All right, Joe – let's see you stop this one!"

And in the same vein, I would bark: "Okay, Jim – both together now!"

Then we'd smash the blows home and our heads would jerk backward and upward – first Corbett's and then mine.

The first five rounds were wicked, blood flowed freely. Corbett winced as his hands back-fired. I groaned inwardly as I felt my own knuckles cracking. Men at the ringside began shouting hoarsely. Sea gulls, wheeling high, swooped now and then as cigar butts and bits of bloody cotton were tossed upon the pitching waters of the bay.

I am no judge, of course, but from what I could gather between rounds, we were putting up some of the most beautiful boxing and slugging ever seen in a ring.

After I got wise to the "morning-sun racket," I vied with Corbett to get a fifty-fifty break on the glare. I simply had to keep that blaze out of my puffed eyes. If you have ever looked into the California sun, morning or evening, you can appreciate my position. There is nothing brighter in America.

Corbett, however, was slippery as an eel. The moment I'd swing him around into the glare, he'd wiggle away, and the next thing I knew I was squinting like a Chinaman. Then the hail of blows would break over me like gun-fire.

Before we had reached the tenth I was thoroughly convinced that Dempsey was dead wrong about me keeping away from Corbett. In the first place, it tired me out to play Corbett's own game, and the reason for this is not far to seek. I was not the gym worker that Corbett was.

Corbett trained in a gymnasium every day. He spent hours perfecting his footwork. It was his regular practice to work with fast men each day from 4 to 6, or from 8 to 10. He seldom missed those hours.

As for that left-hand body punch, the one he used on me so repeatedly, it was perfection itself, as it should have been, as for months he spent an hour a day practicing that one blow.

I do not say this in detriment of Corbett. I say it in admiration. I only wish I had been able to get as much work for my furious battles. But I didn't.

This, then, was the reason I felt that Jack Dempsey was all wrong in urging me, round after round, to stay away from Corbett. Deep in my heart I knew what I should do.

I should have waded in. I should have kept on top of Corbett. I should have slugged him to a standstill. Had I done this, I feel sure that I would have stopped Jim Corbett.

From the foregoing, it will be surmised that I consider Jack Dempsey's help a liability rather than an asset. I am sorry to say it, but I do.

And, just to show you that I was right in this view, Eddie Graney took the same stand when the bout was a little more than half finished.

As I slouched to my corner at the end of the fifteenth Graney said that I was tiring rapidly. No mortal could set a fast pace with Corbett and not tire. Here Graney shoved Dempsey away from me. Then Eddie bawled:

"To blazes with this cautious stuff, Joe! Corbett's cutting you to pieces at long range. Now, you go in there and fight him. Fight him! That's your game. The man's making mince-meat of you!"

There was no doubt about the truth of the latter statement. My eyes were beginning to close. My corner was slipping with my own blood. My lips were puffing. Corbett, however, was not free from blemishes, and his body was red where I welted him again and again.

In the sixteenth, I began the kind of fight I should have launched in the opening rounds. I ploughed into Corbett and started throwing rights and lefts from every conceivable angle.

I think this amazed Jim. He had seen me tiring. He thought I was all set for the killing. But I have spoken before of my recuperative powers. In the face of a terrific lacing, I was able to put a lot of steam into those punches.

Corbett felt them, all right, for he wore a cane for three weeks after that battle on the barge. And

he frankly admitted that it was the worst fight he ever went through.

Determination to fight my own style of battle from now on helped me a little, but I must confess that I waited too long. I listened to Dempsey when I should have been following my own ideas. I gave Corbett all I had, but it was not enough.

At this stage of the fight my eyes were almost closed from Corbett's jabs. I could scarcely see him and the little ring of tense spectators crouched at the ringside. My lips were split and hanging. But I bored in and made Corbett like it.

During the last few rounds both of us were on the verge of exhaustion. And we were sick from the movement of the boat, the terrific strain, and the smeary blood.

I was ready to drop. Corbett was ready to drop. Victory hung delicately posed above that barge in the Straits of Carquinez.

Then Jack Dempsey, seeing me bleeding so freely and thinking I was all in, whispered to Graney. I couldn't hear the words but I knew what he was saying. He wanted me to quit!

It was the twentieth round. I shoved Dempsey away. Then I pulled Eddie Graney's head down. I said – but let Graney tell it:

“Dempsey held a sponge in his hand. He was worried about Joe. He suggested to me that he throw in the sponge. But I looked at Corbett. Then I looked at Joe. Both were terribly tired. It was a question: “Who is worst off?”

‘Here Joe Choynski pulled my head down near his bloody lips and spoke the words I shall never forget:

“Don't throw in the sponge, Ed!” he pleaded. ‘I'm not licked yet. I'm fighting my own fight now. Please don't stop it. Let him kill me, but don't say I quit!”

“Those were the words of an iron man of the ring, a man who didn't know the meaning of the word fear, and I am proud that I was behind him that unforgettable day in June!

“So I refused to let Dempsey fling in the sponge that would symbolize defeat. Joe Choynski would go down fighting! But his poor lips were terribly battered, and hanging. So I told Dempsey to get out his knife. And we trimmed Joe Choynski's lips!”

After this, it was only a matter of time. I summoned all the strength I had, and again took the offensive. It worked for a while, for Corbett was fast weakening, but in the end I was the one to go down.

The end came in the twenty-seventh. I couldn't see Corbett, but I got close to him and staggered him with a final barrage of rights and lefts.

Then his weight and science tipped the scales, and I was the one to be counted out, one knee on the deck and one hand on the ropes. I was exhausted. But I had done my best. Graney writes:

“But Choynski did not turn yellow under punishment. He took it standing. And he was fighting, in a grueling last flair, when he ducked and met Corbett’s left. Then Joe fell.

“It was the grandest fight of all time – with no ‘gate’ – but fully \$50,000 changed hands there on the barge. Morse Gunst lost \$10,000 on Joe.

‘What a battle! They turned down \$10,000 each to fight it out in private for \$1,000 a side! (Corbett did. Not me!)

I have no alibis. It has never been my policy to offer excuses. In my day, I had one hundred and fifty fights – losing but eight or ten – but I have always felt that my various opponents deserved full credit, whether they won or lost.

Jim Corbett was one of the greatest and trickiest men the ring has developed. We fought several times, as I have shown, but only once to a finish, and every time we met I was impressed by Corbett’s speed and ring generalship.

Corbett himself admits that he himself could have gone no further when I collapsed.

It as even a contest as could be imagined. After it was all over Corbett hobbled around on a cane. I went to the Turkish baths.

That fight was the talk of the country. It created a furor that lasted for years. Men still talk of it. Recently, when Corbett introduced me to Frank Tinney, the actor, Tinney exclaimed:

“Are you the Choynski who fought Corbett on the barge? Why – why, say – you’re just a little fellow! But man, oh, man, what a pippin that was!”

Well, I suppose I do look small, and people find it difficult to understand how I fought and held my own against men like Jim Corbett, Jim Jeffries, Tom Sharkey, Jack Johnson, Joe Goddard and other heavyweights who outweighed me from fifty to seven-five pounds.

When I fought Jeffries a twenty round draw I weighed 159 pounds. I knocked out Jack Johnson when I weighed but 160. In my famous finish fight with Corbett I weighed only 155.

Corbett would never meet me again. Why not? I don’t know. But I do know this: I challenged him repeatedly. But he would have no part of me.

Perhaps it was his extreme cautiousness. I have spoken of this – the thing that lost him his fight with Fitzsimmons.

Corbett was overwrought and unnecessarily apprehensive over that fight. His trainers vainly

sought to divert his mind from the battle. He was in awe of what he considered the deadly hitting power of Fitz.

But I could have told Corbett what Fitzsimmons's state of mind was. Fitz had no thought of winning. He didn't have the slightest idea he could beat the highly-touted Corbett. His sole hope was to stay as long as he could, and pray for a break.

However, when Fitz found that Corbett's blows, delivered on the run, did not hurt him very badly, he decided to tear in and take a chance. He remained cool, fought doggedly, and finally plastered Corbett, with disastrous results to the latter.

My feud with Corbett is over. We have long been friends. Time has a softening influence over most of us. Only the irreconcilables hate forever. I'm not one of those. In giving this story to Tom Lewis I am only stating my side of the case. Corbett gave his version. This is mine.

And now we pass on to the behemoths – some of the massive fellows I chopped down in my fierce clashes with the iron men of the ring. Now watch the tonnage!

George Ade once said to me: "You are too heavy to be a lightweight, and too light to be a heavyweight."

But in spite of this so-called handicap, I went to Australia and agreed to take on the mastodons. Only twice in my life, when I clashed with the might Joe Goddard in the Antipodes, was I able to bring my weight up to 168.

And I had to do that by forced feeding! Otherwise, I might have been refused a chance at Goddard, the terrifying Barrier Champion. On other occasions announcer "boosted" my weight.

Before sailing for Australia, I agreed to take on another mammoth, Mike McClarney, an Irish giant of six feet two inches, who had been flattening all comers around Portland, Oregon.

McClarney weighed close to 200, but was fast. For two minutes of the opening round he tore after me like an enraged bull. Once he bashed me a mighty bender behind the ear. I saw ferris wheels and whirligigs, but somehow I saved myself and didn't go down.

Then snapping out of it, I belted the Irish Giant so hard I knocked him through the ropes. He tore down a post as he fell out into the audience.

The big crowd in Exposition Hall had never seen a man knocked out before. They thought McClarney was dead, and they immediately made a mad scramble for the exits. Somebody yelled for an undertaker. However, it was a pulmotor they needed, not an undertaker.

Next they took me down the river – the Willamette – to tackle a gigantic lumberjack. He had been flattening the challengers so fast the promoters couldn't dig up victims for him. His friends collected \$1,000 to bet he could take me.

In the open, at Three-Mile House, this powerful lumberjack and I stripped to the waist and donned three-ounce gloves.

He had muscles like iron and looked as if he might stun a gorilla with those huge arms of his. He looked down on me and grinned. I guess he thought, "It won't be long now."

This fellow at the tap of the gong, dashed at me like a bulldog going after a cat. I tapped him one, and spun him around.

He let out a hoarse bellow and plunged in. To this day I can see those bulging arms swinging. I knew I must not let him connect.

So I ducked and smashed a right hook to his whiskers. He tumbled as if he had been smashed with a beer-mallet. I left him sprawled under the trees in the midst of his dumbfounded friends.

It was about this time in San Francisco, that one Billy Wilson, an enormous black fellow, began hurling challenges at Peter Jackson. This Wilson hailed from St. Paul. He had piled up a formidable list of heavyweight casualties.

All the heavies on the West Coast were dodging Wilson. Nonpareil Jack Dempsey, who had watched Wilson work, said he had enough stuff to whip John L. Sullivan.

Therefore, when I announced, quite cheerfully, that I would take on this excess baggage from St. Paul, Jack Dempsey raised his hands in horror. He thought I was crazy.

"He'll murder you!" said Dempsey.

"Well," I replied, "as far as I can observe, Wilson has two hands and a pair of legs. If he had any more, they'd only be in his way when I get in there with him."

Jack McAuliffe, lightweight champion, bet \$1,000 on me. Jack, at that time, was in San Francisco to meet Boston Jimmy Carroll. They were to fight for \$5,000, the largest purse offered up to that time and there was to be a side wager of \$5,000. Claus Spreckels, the sugar baron, was backing Carroll.

When Dempsey chided McAuliffe for risking \$1,000 on me against a powerful opponent like Wilson, the little lightweight champion retorted:

Say, I know what I'm doing, Jack! Right now, Joe Choynski is good enough to beat any man in the world. He'll trim Wilson."

While I was training for Wilson I caught my first glimpse of Bob Fitzsimmons.

Poorly dressed, and almost friendless, he had just landed from Australia. He carried all his belongings in a single carpet-bag.

As I was getting ready to punch the bag, Tom James, steward on the Pacific Steamship Zealandia, came in and said:

“Joe, I want you to meet Bob Fitzsimmons. He’s a good fighter I’ve brought out from Australia.”

Fitz shook hands awkwardly and mumbled, “Pleased to meet you.”

I thought Fitz was the most unimpressive looking fighter I had ever seen. But he came out, at my invitation, and trained there; and I quickly decided that he was a finished boxer even then. Much more so, in fact, than he was in later years, when he changed his style completely and went in whole-heartedly for slugging. This was so he could utilize to the utmost his terrific hitting power.

Fitz was keenly interested in my coming match with the so-called terrible Wilson. He watched my training with a practiced and, I thought, an anxious eye.

However, there was one factor in my favor. A chap who had once helped condition me for a fight, joined Wilson’s staff and proceeded to show him how to meet my attack. He beat it into Wilson’s head that he must be on guard against my terrible right.

“Choynski will ruin you if he ever lands that right of his on you,” this chap told Wilson.

So Wilson spent most of his time building up a plan to avoid my right in this widely-heralded fight, which, incidentally, drew an enormous gate.

The first round, opening at a killing pace, found the enormous black veering off steadfastly in an effort to dodge my right. He was always going to the left. But he crowded me at times and we landed some slashing blows.

I knew at once that Jack Dempsey had not been joshing about Wilson. He had long arms, knew how to use them, and he gave me plenty to think about. His blows carried ample power.

Suddenly, during a deadly mix-up near my corner, I slipped just as he laced me with a stinging uppercut. It seemed to knock my head loose from my shoulders.

This wallop dazed me, but I bounded up, without the aid of a count, and began trying to even the score. Men were shouting madly.

Above the uproar I caught the cries of Wilson’s trainer – imploring him to look out for that right of mine.

I suppose Wilson thought he had me. Anyway, he stepped in close and banged a hard left to my stomach.

Then, suddenly, I saw my chance. I threw every possible ounce of weight behind my left, and smacked a hook to the big fellow’s jaw.

Wilson fell as if he had run head-on into a Market Street trolley. The fight was over in less than one round. Wilson had avoided my right – but they hadn't figured on my left, with its punishing hook.

This finished Wilson's ambitious plans in the Golden West. In fact, I never heard of him again. It is my belief that he got discouraged and quit the boxing game after the terrific pasting I gave him. He was not the only one I disheartened. I guess I ruined plenty of heavies.

Before going into my Australian fights, I want to relate here a peculiar thing about Bob Fitzsimmons.

At his own request, I seconded Fitz for his first fight in America. This was with Billy McCarthy.

Fitz, at that time, had no conception of his latent ability. In fact, he lacked confidence in himself, was easily discouraged, and seemed ready to quit on the slightest pretext.

It was in the first round of his fight with McCarthy when Fitz injured his right thumb on McCarthy's head. Fitz immediately became downcast. He wanted to quit.

"Nonsense," I objected, "you don't even need a right hand to whip this man. Go on in there and jab his head off with your left. Then all you've got to do is hook him. And the fight's over!"

Fitz seemed doubtful, but I felt sure he could do as I had said; and he did. The result was Fitz knocked McCarthy out with his left.

I make no effort to reconcile this conduct with his later ring life. There was no doubt as to his courage in his mighty ring clashes that followed. I merely state the facts for what they are worth. It is an interesting sidelight on a great man. Fitz, of course, had a lot of things peculiarly his own, especially his footwork. This was one of the most significant points in connection with his amazing work in the ring.

For my part, I paid close attention to his footwork. I figured with him, as I figured with all fighters in my class, that the day might come when I would clash with him in the ring. As it later turned out, I did meet Fitzsimmons, and I am sure that my patient study of his footwork helped me immeasurably in my momentous battle with him.

Fitzsimmons, coming from a country blessed with such great teachers as Jem Mace and Larry Foley, had a bag of tricks that any might study with profit. I was eager to go to the Antipodes, anxious to learn the real secret of the amazing success of the Australians, and I welcomed the opportunity which came to me at this time.

Australia, with a civilized population less than that of the city of Chicago, has developed some of the finest fighting men the ring has ever seen.

We have only to glance at the outstanding figures. Here we find bob Fitzsimmons, Jim Hall, Joe Goddard, Young Griffio, Jim Fogarty, Dan Creedon, Mick Dooley, Hughie Napier, Dummy

Mace, Tom Williams, Shadow Maber, Owen Sullivan, Billy Murphy, Larry Foley, Jim Barron, Jimmy Ryan, Tommy Treacey, George Dawson, Chiddy Ryan and Nipper Peaks.

When I arrived in Australia I found that Larry Foley conducted the school for training the great fighters of the Antipodes. He, with Mick Dooley, was cleverest of them all. He had been a pupil of the matchless Jem Mace.

What a man Mace was! All over the pugilistic world, I have found his influence. He invented the head-shift. In Australia they paid high tribute to Mace. They told me it was virtually impossible for a boxer to hit Mace's head.

I saw Mace box when he was eighty years old. He stood up for three rounds and his opponent couldn't lay a glove on his head. He must have been a marvel when he was in his prime.

My first opponent in Australia was Jim Fogarty. He was a leading heavyweight. They referred to him quite lovingly as "The Jawbreaker."

While training for Fogarty my bag-punching attracted wide attention in Sydney. The Australian had never seen a small bag, using only the heavier ones, and they were captivated. Soon after my demonstration they sent to the States for small bags. These they considered marvelous.

My fight with Fogarty went the limit, which was set for ten rounds, with me jabbing and outpointing him. The Australians thought it was a great scrap, and I marked Fogarty repeatedly, but came out of it without a mark on my own face or body.

Then The Referee and other papers boosted me to the skies, and nothing would do but that I must meet Joe Goddard, the great Barrier Champion.

Goddard, an iron man if one ever lived, outweighed me by fifty pounds. He had flat muscles like steel. Nobody in all Australia had been able to pound him down and keep him down.

He was rough as a longshoreman, almost impervious to a knockout punch, and his head was like cast-iron. He was rated, and rightly, with such great heavies as John L. Sullivan, Frank Slavin and Peter Jackson. At that time I think Goddard could have beaten Sullivan, all things considered.

The huge Barrier Champion always claimed that a man could not be knocked out – but, rather, that they quit! He judged all men by himself!

Training for this battle I bumped into some of the hottest weather I've ever experienced. It was unbelievably hot. I have never before, or since, worked under such a grinding handicap.

Yet I knew full well I had to work, and work hard. Goddard, with his formidable knockout record and his unscrupulous ring tactics, was a menace that no man could afford to hold cheaply.

People, looking with pity upon my slight frame, would shake their heads and tell me that

Goddard would kill me. They whispered that he would stop at nothing. I was informed that he would hurl himself on me like an enraged bull. I heard it on all sides: “Why, you haven’t one chance in ten thousand. Goddard will slaughter you!”

Perhaps they were right, they certainly meant well, but I believed in one man and one man only. That man was Choynski! Goddard might kill him, but the Australians would see a battle while he was about it!

What more could they ask?

Joe Goddard was a bone-crusher. I found this out the moment I stepped in the ring with him at Sydney. He depended upon his massiveness and his tremendous battering powers. Few men were able to knock him down.

But I knocked him down. I was outweighed and supposedly outclassed, but such handicaps meant little to me.

The first round opened at a terrific pace. Goddard was living up to his reputation. Yet I was prepared. He rushed me. But I saw my chance, caught him wide open, and floored him with a crashing blow that split his massive chin.

And right there was where I won that fight – and lost it! I knocked all the fight out of Goddard in that first round – only to bump into one of the most aggravating deals a man can get.

When I toppled Goddard with that mighty clout, I was sure I had him. But there was the referee to consider. The Australian ring was twenty-four feet each way, with the referee standing outside the ropes, not inside the ring as in America. And it so happened that when the great Barrier Champion went down, the referee was on the opposite side of the ring. And, before he started counting, he ran all the way around the ring! Can you imagine it?

Talk about your Chicago counts! Joe Goddard was on the floor for at least six seconds before the referee decided to go to work.

Then he took the full ten, which gave him at least sixteen, and finally hoisted himself up to continue the scrap.

I was bitterly disappointed, of course, but what could I do? The crowd gave me a mighty cheer.

Now began one of the fiercest onslaughts of my career. Goddard was infuriated because I had flattened him. Only the long count saved him.

He launched furious rushes, one after the other, and threw himself against me like an express train.

Each time he rushed I ducked, and his enormous body would ram with shocking force against my elbow or shoulder.

Then the referee bobbed up again. He ordered me not to do this!

It was all right for Goddard to batter me down, using any kind of tactics, bone-crusher and otherwise, but when it came to defense, I must play the game their way!

That was a new one on me – forcing me to stand up in the face of bull-rushes and stand off one of the most dangerous contenders in the pugilistic world. Sweet doings.

But I complied. I was determined to live up to their rules. So I traded wallops with Goddard.

Soon the fight became a slaughter. First I would knock Goddard flat. Then he would floor me. I lasted four rounds with the Barrier Champion under these unequal rules, but I made a tremendous hit with the Australians. Here's what one of their own sport writers said in *The Referee*, a leading sport journal of the Antipodes:

“Like two whirlwinds the men went at each other – and smash! smash! smash! With sickening force fell the crushing blows. They fell like hailstones.

“Keep away, Choynski!” someone yelled. But he couldn't or wouldn't, for Larry Foley had given Goddard his orders and Goddard was doing his best to carry them out.

Foley tol' Goddard: “Fight for his body. He's too slippery with his head.” (What a tribute – coming from a man like Foley!)

And well it was for Goddard that he had the Australian king of seconds (Foley) in his corner this night!

Never in the world did a man need wise counsel in time of desperate straits more than Joe Goddard did in this fight.

Smash! on the point went Choynski's glove – and down crashed Goddard.

Then a frantic, maddening struggle went on, with this man up and that man down, and all the time Choynski trying, with that peculiar hook of his, to lay Goddard down for all time.

As they struggled up Goddard was bleeding from the nose, the mouth and an ugly gash over the eye. Yet Choynski did not show a mark.

Once, on the ropes, there was a stirring rally, and Choynski got his back to the ropes while trying for a knockout punch.

Instantly Goddard took advantage of this. Then, as he did the night he fought Owen Sullivan, Goddard drew back and hurled his gigantic frame against Choynski's slighter bulk, and by sheer strength crushed his body over the ropes.

Poor Joe, game, dashing lad, with a great heart, slipped down and looked as if every rib in his body was broken. We thought the life had been crushed out of him.

“Foul!” rose the cry, but the referee refused to allow it, and the terrible struggle went on. Choynski rallied, though we never knew how, and battered Goddard until he was almost helpless, his arms hanging at his sides.

But Choynski, too, was exhausted after his supernatural exertions, and for a moment it seemed that both men would fall to the floor.

However, they came out of it, as well conditioned men can, and soon they were exchanging again those paralyzing blows to head and body.

Choynski dashed in his left four times – so fast and so hard – that Goddard’s hands again fell. He stood in the center of the ring, rocking on his feet, and smiling in a sickly manner.

Later Goddard, a man of iron constitution, rallied when Choynski was failing – and then the end came, with Goddard the winner.

Naturally, my dramatic showing against Goddard resulted in universal clamor for fresh combat, and the Australians, despite my first-round defeat, promptly matched me with Owen Sullivan.

Sullivan was a gigantic fellow, six feet five inches tall, and he had fought two hectic battles with the might Goddard. He was a graduate of the Larry Foley school and was rated very clever.

I was not given much chance with Sullivan, most partisans believing he would slaughter me, but an admirer of mine startled the sporting fraternity by wagering 300 pounds that I would stop Sullivan in less than four rounds. The Australians thought my friend was balmy.

But my admirer was not crazy and he might just as easily called it the second round and wagered a million, for I knocked Sullivan out in the first round with a might smash to the ribs, and he had to be carried to his corner. He was “out” for an hour and for a long time we feared he would die. It was seven days before he could leave his bed.

Still believing I could beat the great Goddard – and now having many admirers who craved a return match – I asked for, and received another fight.

Our second fight was pretty much a repetition of the first, only more grueling, and Goddard defeated me in four rounds. The same sort of rulings by the Australian referee defeated me.

Two years later, in Philadelphia, I met Goddard for the third time. And there, with an American referee and fair rules, I gave Goddard a severe beating in six rounds. He didn’t even lay a glove on me, as you will see.

Deciding to give me a break with a man nearer my own weight, the Australians selected as my next opponent the very clever and widely-known Mick Dooley.

Mike Dooley was shrewdest of all Larry Foley's pupils. He weighed about 170 and was the first man near my own weight I had met. Dooley had fought Goddard twice, losing his last fight in the eighteenth, after a stiff battle. He had also waged bitter contests with that tough customer, Frank Slavin. Slavin was regarded the equal of Joe Goddard.

Dooley's wonderful skill was superior to mine, but I had been absorbing a great deal of the Foley influence and I put it to good use against Dooley. I battered him down and knocked him out in a manner that set the Australians on their ears.

They begged me to remain and even gave me a purse of two hundred sovereigns, but I was getting homesick. I met John L. Sullivan on the street one day. His show was going badly. As an actor he was a great heavyweight. John wanted me to return home and urged me to come on the same ship. I agreed.

On the boat Sullivan told me I had two great ands and a bright future. But neither of us knew that my iron fists were to sink into Jeffries, Fitzsimmons, Sharkey, McCoy, Maher, Jack Johnson, Jim Hall, Denver Ed Smith, George Godfrey, Gus Ruhlin, Joe McAuliffe, Dan Creedon, Joe Walcott, and scores of other bruisers, big and medium, before I finally hung up the gloves.

On the boat I found Sullivan affable and interesting. He told me many amusing stories. I sparred with him. He was a very skillful boxer and a tremendous hitter.

At the Samoan Islands we visited King Mateefa, a 300-pound giant, at the King's request. He was almost nude and was tattooed beautifully. He laughed as he said to the famous John L. Sullivan, "Why, you're not such a big man. I would not be afraid to fight you myself!"

I was glad that Sullivan, while in Australia, did not fight some of the great men they had over there. If he had, I am afraid the championship would have left the United States, for his condition was not the best.

In San Francisco, upon my return, my first match was with Billy Woods, of Denver. He was a Scotch heavyweight, six feet tall, and a perfectly built athlete.

Con Mooney, a life-long friend of Bat Masterson, was at the ringside. He kept telling Woods that I had weak legs.

"Stay away from him!" he yelled. "His pins are no good. Tire him out. Then murder him."

This was to be a finish fight. Woods knocked me down in the first round. I got up and knocked him down.

After this it was nip and tuck, with Mooney howling about my so-called bum legs, but I got the edge after the thirteenth round. In the thirty-fourth I put Woods down. And this time he stayed put.

Then I walked ten miles out to Barney Farley's roadhouse, just to taper off on my training, and the reporters told Mooney my legs were so "weak" that I could walk from San Francisco to Los Angeles and still lick a carload of men like Woods.

At this time, with John L. Sullivan's show not doing so good at the Bush Street Theatre, I agreed to box three rounds with the famous Bostonian. We packed the house.

Sullivan, decidedly on the toboggan, was slowing up and his wind was getting bad. Again I was glad he had not fought in Australia.

Peter Maher was making a lot of noise at this period and I tried to get a fight with him in New Orleans.

But the Louisiana promoters thought I was too tough for Maher. So they decided on Bob Fitzsimmons. As I have pointed out, Fitz was not highly rated in those days; didn't realize his own powers.

Fitz asked me to second him. He was doubtful about the outcome. But I insisted he could beat Maher and I was right for he turned the trick in twelve rounds.

Although I had never had a manager, I decided now that I should get some smart fellow to handle my engagements. Parson Davies was managing Peter Jackson and Jim Hall. I signed on with Davies.

Davies sent me to Chicago. There, at the old Battery, I went to work knocking out all comers. Davies offered \$100 to any man I could not stop in four rounds.

I knocked out Mike Bolden, Bob Ferguson, "Pluch" Douglas and many other iron-jawed and thick-muscle bruisers. Davies then matched me with George Godfrey, the Boston negro heavyweight who had lasted nineteen rounds with Peter Jackson. Jackson, at this time was rated by many as the greatest heavyweight in the world. John L. Sullivan steadfastly refused to meet him.

I clashed with Godfrey at Coney Island, New York. He was a good man, remarkably clever and a hard puncher, but he had a way of taunting an opponent in the way of infuriating him.

I slashed Godfrey unmercifully in the first five rounds, but I took many a blast from his huge fists in return, and for a time it seemed a question who would win.

In the fourteenth round Godfrey began taunting me, but I kept my head, and let him rave. Every time he'd let out a taunt, I'd unleash a haymaker. Godfrey didn't like it.

So, in the fifteenth, he made a big mistake, and it cost him the fight. He called me a vile name!

I guess he thought this would make my blood boil. Well, it did, all right, but I knew enough to keep my liver in its place till the first wild rage had passed.

Then, coolly and somewhat deliberately, I squared the account. I busted Godfrey in the stomach and then cracked him on the jaw. The gentleman of the insults went down – and out.

It just doesn't pay to say things like that to a fellow who can keep his wits about him. Personally, I never made a practice of saying insulting things to any man. With the exception of one occasion, I refrained from saying unkind things in the ring. I did speak sharply to Joe Goddard, the Barrier Champion, but that was in retaliation. He had used me very unfairly in our Australian fights.

Thereafter, Jim Hall and I met all challengers. We took turns about at the old Niblo Garden in New York. One time Jim passed up a massive negro fighter, C.C. Smith, known as the Black Thunderbolt.

Davies was afraid the Thunderbolt would annihilate me. But I told the Parson that lightning was more potent than thunder. So I turned on the current – the lightning struck Smith, and he fell like a blasted tree.

Peter Jackson, my stable-mate was now matched to fight Frank Slavin in England. I went with Davies to help condition Jackson.

This great fight was staged in Covent Gardens. Everybody of any consequence in London was there – not a vacant seat.

I will never forget Slavin's powerful build. He had a head like a gargoyle. But Jackson's great bronzed body captivated the British. He was the recipient of many favors.

Slavin was aggressive, but Jackson was too smart for him. They set a fast and exciting pace for six rounds. Jackson would jab his left to the head. Then he would follow with a hard right to the body. This cut Slavin down.

But it also told on Jackson. At the close of the eleventh, although Slavin was pretty woozy, Jackson said to me: "I'm getting very tired."

Still, he couldn't knock Slavin out. It is sometimes quite difficult to flatten a man who is groggy. They hang on and on. So I told Jackson:

"Work him against the ropes. Put everything you've got into a solid punch. Then step back quickly and he may fall from the blow and the rebound.

Jackson tried it several times, but couldn't get his man in the right position. However, he kept at it. And finally it worked. Slavin fell and was counted out. He was too weak to rise.

While in London I challenged Ted Pritchard. He was middleweight champion and the idol of the British. The English laughed at me. But it was clear that Pritchard wanted none of my game.

Jim Hall, however, was honored by a match with Pritchard, and also a fight with Slavin. Hall stopped both men.

Jackson became a popular idol in England. He enjoyed himself so well he undermined his great constitution. Such things are bad. It was the beginning of the down-grade for Jackson.

Before returning to America I appeared in a play in London. We had a bar-room scene in which I took on all comers. The management offered twenty pounds to any man who could last three rounds with me. I knocked out Mike Horrigan, Albert Hall and a score of heavies.

Then, there being no immediate matches in sight, I decided to return to America for the Corbett-Sullivan fight in New Orleans. I issued a challenge to Jem Smith, the English heavyweight champion, but he ignored me until the day of my departure. Then, safely enough, he accepted – provided I would give him six months in which to train! But why should I? I could whip a dozen men in that space of time! And a lot of them bigger than Smith.

As far as the Corbett-Sullivan fracas is concerned, there isn't much to say – except that my earlier diagnosis of John L. was borne out.

Three days before the bout I watched Sullivan punch the bag. I knew at once that he was fearfully slow. I had hoped to find him in better condition.

But instead, Sullivan was ripe for the killing. Fitzsimmons or Maher would have defeated him in three rounds or less.

There is one incident of the fight, however, that seems to have been passed up by all those who have written about the bout.

It was in the twenty-first round – the last – when John L. suddenly bent forward and stuck out his jaw. I suppose he wanted to show his supreme contempt for Corbett's blows.

Corbett, of course, had fought intelligently. He was in perfect condition – waiting for the inevitable collapse of the once mighty champion.

While in New Orleans I seconded Jack Skelly in his fight with George Dixon. I also seconded Jack McAuliffe against Billy Myer.

Then, under Parson Davies, we went barnstorming and finally wound up as actors. Imagine! We played "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Parson Davies was the auctioneer. I was George Shelby. And Peter Jackson was Uncle Tom – with that English accent of his. I got many a scream out of that one.

The show was a success, but I had no love for the footlights, and welcomed every chance to "put on an understudy," and then go out and add to my knockout record in the ring.

It was at this period that I clashed with Australian Jimmy Ryan, who was regarded as one of the most dangerous hitters in the sock business. We met in New York and, after a good stiff battle, I

knocked him out in seven rounds. And that was a battle!

Then came Jack Dalton, at Chicago, and I settled his hash in three rounds. After this they gave me Joe Godfrey in Philadelphia.

Joe Godfrey had been promising me great things – but to promise is one thing; to execute is quite another.

Unfortunately for Joe, it was Choynski and not Godfrey who furnished the fireworks for the execution. I finished him off with a lightning right to the cheek. The fight ended in the first minute of the first round.

Then I got married. Parson Davies had engaged Louise Anderson Miller to play Topsy in our company. I can't say what she saw in me, but I knew she was the woman for me. Time has proved I was correct. We have been married these many years, and I think she's wonderful!

Naturally, all my behemoth activities boosted my drawing power, and it wasn't long before fight promoters began trying to rib up a match between Bob Fitzsimmons and myself.

I knew this was coming and I hoped it would be soon. I had not the slightest doubt as to my ability to knock Fitzsimmons down – and knock him out.

Fitzsimmons was one prizefighter I never underestimated. He had developed into a two-fisted bearcat and every boxer who knew anything at all had the utmost respect for his wallops.

It will be remembered that I had known Fitz ever since his arrival in San Francisco. I had seconded him. I had watched his footwork. He was no closed book to me. No man realized more thoroughly than I did the full extent of the dynamite he carried in his gloves.

Most of Fitzsimmon's opponents entered the ring scared out of their wits. I have told how nervous Corbett was. McCoy never could be induced to fight Fitz. Peter Maher, who had tasted defeat at the hands of Fitz, had to be almost carried into the ring for his second fight with Ruby Robert. Even Jeffries, in his first bout with the Australian, gave every appearance of doubt and dread until the last two rounds.

However, I was not afraid of Bob Fitzsimmons. He was among the long list of men I had the honor of knocking out.

Yes, I knocked him out cold, but I was robbed of the victory, as I will show.

We met in the Music Hall in Boston in 1894. I can see Lanky Bob, even now, as he stood facing me in the ring. He studied me closely, his little eyes squinting, but he tried no goat getting.

The bell banged. We began filling each other out. I guess he respected me. As for myself, I certainly had no intention of rushing in wildly and stopping a haymaker.

The first and second rounds, while fairly even, brought out some stiff punches. Both of us were shaken, but no great damage was done. Once, after he had stung me with a stiff jolt on the nose, Fitz drawled:

“Ow’d you like the smell of that ‘off?’”

I don’t know why he said this. It was the only time I had ever heard him speak to an opponent in the ring. But I retorted:

“Do you think you’re shoeing horses now, Bob?”

We went to our corners at the end of the second. As I sat resting I saw him watching me. His peculiar little eyes glittered.

Then came the third round – and the fireworks began. We had been fiddling and feinting, feeling each other out, when suddenly Bob began shuffling his feet.

He was edging his left foot forward. Instinct warned me. He was getting ready for a swift double lead. It would come fast as lightning.

I knew I could expect a left for the body or head. This would be followed by a darting crusher that might land anywhere, and would come thrusting at me like the tongue of a serpent.

I had to act fast. Quick as instinct, I determined to break up this play with an offensive.

Therefore, I started a swift right, purposely high, and stopped it instantly as Bob worked the Mace head-shift- and then crashed a paralyzing left over his ear with all my strength.

Bob Fitzsimmons tumbled flat on his back with a heavy crash, as if he had been thrown from a catapult.

Right here was where the jobbing was done. Captain Jack Dalton, referee, began counting:

“One – get back, Choynski – two – keep away, Choynski – three, four – Choynski, there will be no counting while you are close – five, six – don’t come near, Choynski – “ and so on through the travesty – the same old army game, designed to rob a fighter of a clean-cut victory.

Just before his “ten” was reached – it must have been nearly twice that – the bell rang!

But, according to my timekeeper, that round was just one minute and forty five seconds old!

Fitz was helped to his corner. There they worked over him desperately. I was informed later that the bell had been rung on the orders of Captain Glori, a police officer who was then acting as manager for Fitzsimmons.

The short round and the long rest benefited Fitz. When he came out for the fourth he was almost

himself again.

The man had amazing stamina.

He realized fully how near I had come to cooking his goose and he began fighting like a tiger. We slugged, clinched, broke apart and slugged again. The battle became fast and furious. We were both bloody. The fourth finished in an uproar.

In the fifth Fitz caught me with a stiff uppercut and I went to my knees. He could hit. But I was up and at him, with the blood splattering, when the bell banged and the police stopped the fight. It was recorded as a draw. But it was not a draw, I had won – and was robbed. But I don't mean to say that Fitz was a party to the jobbing. Nor am I "beefing" about it at this late date. I am merely presenting facts as they occurred.

Next day, when I met Fitz on the street he had a peach of a black eye. He rubbed his cheek ruefully. The weather was terribly hot. Fitz wept.

"That was some bloody wallop you 'anded me, Choynski!" he said.

"I know it," I replied, "but here's one thing I want to ask you, Bob: How did you ever manage to get up?"

His reply was characteristic.

"I was thinking of what Rose would say," he said.

Rose was his wife, and more than once her benign influence helped Bob Fitzsimmons. And this time the thought of her pulled him off the floor when defeat stared him in the face. I admired his spirit. But I could not forget the raw deal I got.

After the Fitzsimmons fray, I took on two tough fellows who had been upsetting the plans of ambitious heavies. One was Frank Childs. The other was Billy Stiff.

Both were dangerous maulers. I stopped both in three rounds.

I also stopped Mike Brennan, in two rounds; Jim Chamberlain, in one round; Ed Black and Mike Queenan, in three rounds, and numerous other contenders who thought they could sock.

Then another mastodon bobbed up and they asked me to come back to my home town of San Francisco and chop down Joe McAuliffe, the Mission Giant. He was six feet four inches tall, and weighed 250 pounds. I knocked him out in four rounds; but when I tried to carry him to his corner, I found I couldn't even lift him.

This fight was staged before the Occidental Club and attracted an enormous crowd. I renewed many acquaintances in the Golden Gate, but was too busy to linger long. The East was clamoring for a fight between Choynski and Peter Maher. And if Joe Choynski knew anything about it, both

the East and Peter Maher would get their wish.

Next month's installment of "I Fought 'Em All" concludes the dramatic life story of Joe Choynski. He tells his own intimate narrative in his own way, and it's amazing revelations throw new light on those early, rugged days of the squared circle. Watch for it!

The Berkshire Evening Eagle

Pittsfield ,Mass

Tuesday Jan 26, 1943

Gentleman Jim

Scored win over Joe in 28th Round

Choynski and Corbett Battled each Other five times but the scap on Barge was easily the best of all. Choynski, the little man who beat many good big men made several other Notable contribution to pugilistic History, but will be remembered longest For his bloody barge brawl with "Gentlemen Jim" . that was the ultimate in grudge fights.

San Francisco Rivals

Corbett and Choynski were reared a few blocks apart in. the Hayes Valley section of San Francisco, and as each progressed pugilistically they became bitter rivals for the admiration of the city's fight fans. They fought five times, but four of these feuding engagements were minor meetings compared to that thundering melee on the barge. The feud started when both were amateurs, Corbett boxing for the Olympic Club and Choynski for the rival California Athletic Club. Brothers of both boxers worked in the City Hall. They argued and their arguments spread to admirers of Irish Corbett and Jewish Choynski. After various "incidents," Jim and Joe fought with their bare fists in the sand hills outside the city one Sunday morning in 1883. Corbett knocked out Joe in the first round.

A year later they met in an amateur tourney and Corbett, won a three - round decision. Choynski turned professional and enjoyed such success that he decided to tackle, his arch-enemy again. Members of Choynski's club goaded Corbett, through the newspapers, into accepting a match-for-stakes or professional bout with Joe. Corbett, instructor at the Olympic Club after quitting his job as bank teller, was an amateur. It required much persuasion before his father, Pat, consented to the professional match, but he did it out of family pride.

Fight Shifted From Barn Corbett and Choynski met for a finish fight in a barn near Fairfax, Cal., on May 30, 1889, with a \$2000 side bet at stake. The sheriff and deputies stopped the bout in the fourth round. Hence it was shifted to a- barge, anchored in the Strait of Carquinez, near Benecia on June 5.

A broiling sun beat down on the barge as Corbett and Choynski were rowed out from shore.

More than 200 spectators were aboard. Corbett fought with two-ounce gloves, and Joe used teamster's gloves because he had lost his two ounce mitts. Corbett outweighed Joe, 178 pounds to 170, and had advantages of height, reach and speed.

Corbett won the opening rounds with masterly boxing, but injured his left and in--the' third round. He already was handicapped by a broken right thumb, suffered in the brief barn engagement. Choynski, the harder puncher, kept boring in with his seamed gloves, and by the fifth round, both were bleeding profusely.

In the 14th, Joe exploded a left hook on Corbett's right eye, almost knocking him out. Corbett staggered about the deck but didn't go down. Jim rallied in the 15th and they continued fighting furiously.

As the deck became slippery with blood and some of the spectators sickened at this sight of the gore, Referee Patsy Hogan wanted to stop the brawl and call it a draw, but neither principal would permit it. Both men were in terrible shape in the 25th. Corbett's eye was completely closed and his hand injuries forced him to hit with his wrists.

In the 28th Corbett summoned all his strength and drove a right to Choynski's jaw. Joe went down for the count, and Jim almost fainted from the pain in his right hand. He didn't know the fight was over when his brothers helped him to his corner.

Corbett always described the ending of this baige bout as a full count knockout in the 28th round. However, Nat Fleischer's ring record book, in listing Choynski's fights, says it ended in the 27th when Choynski was unable to continue. Choynski and Jim met again on July 15 that year in a four-round bout at the Olympic Club, with Jim taking the decision. But this was an anti-climactic engagement. As Corbett went on to become heavyweight champion and Choynski also carved out a career with his fists

Sunday State Journal 23 Jan 1910

BATTLE WAS A GRUDGE FIGHT.

I can hardly repress a smile When I think of the agitated governors and district attorneys who go

into Hysterics over our modern contests with six ounce gloves. Some of these ladylike gentlemen Should have seen the sport when it was in its iron days. It would have done them good and put some real red blood in their veins.

Perhaps – could they have gone to Benicia on that famous day twenty Years ago when James J Corbett and Joe Choynski fought to a finish on a barge anchored out in deep water. Those were the heroic days of The ring, Fighter didn't quibble over purses and gate money and theatrical dates. They fought because fighting was in their blood.

The hatred between the two men was the talk of the town and excited so much interest that the Californian Athletic club offered the \$10,000 for a 10 round contest. It may seem strange to any modern pugilist but they turned down the offer. They did not want to fight with big gloves for a few rounds. They wanted a fight to the finish.

It was arranged at last and the two agreed to meet for a side bet of \$2000 to a finish wearing two ounce gloves. The Olympic Club boys Put up Corbetts \$1000 and Charlie Asher posted for Choynski. About 200 sports saw the fight. They rowed out to the waiting grain barge in small boats. Some put up as much as \$200 to see the mill. There were famous men in that crowd – bankers, merchants, politicians and actors. Nat Goodman, who was playing at the old Baldwin Theatre in San Francisco, swung a towel for Choynski and when he got ashore late in the afternoon he telegraphed “Dismiss the audience, can't get back in time”.

Then there was Phil Crimmins, who as a member of the Kelly and Crimmins combination Bossed San Francisco for years afterward. In the middle of the fight Crimmins got so excited that he fell overboard and as everybody was busy watching the fight he nearly drowned before his friends thought of looking for him.

The fight was early in the morning when the men Came together. Choynski's gloves were missing and there was a short delay. Corbett had his two ounce gloves on. A two ounce glove is a deadly weapon for it protects the hand and allows delivery of a hard punch without danger of hurting the knuckles, yet does as much damage as a bare fist.

Captain Griffith, a racing man, passed up his driving gloves Corbett handed them along to Choynski. Joe offered to let Corbett use them “Use the yourself or use bare knuckles” said Corbett. Choynski put the gloves on. They were so tight he couldn't close his fists. He wanted to cut the fingers off but Corbett objected. **The fight began.**

Choynski at that time was rough and rugged and a wicked hitter, but little science. Corbett was already a master of the art of boxing. He had the advantage of height and reach and at once made use of it. He Jabbed Choynski time and again in The face and the blood ran as the light gloves landed.

Jack Dempsey was behind Choynski. He had taken a bottle of whiskey to Drive out the cold and was hardly in shape to second a fighting man. His one advice to Joe was to stand off and box. This is just what Corbett wanted him to do.

They fought like tigers, after the fifth round Choynski's nose was broken, both lips were split and both eyes near closed. Corbett's face and body was cut to ribbons on the back of Choynski's gloves.

By the 15th Choynski was thoroughly whipped but he wouldn't quit. Both eyes were swollen shut he could only see enough to keep tearing in and slam away for general results.

He went over to Corbett's corner in the 16th started shouting "Come on Jim" Delaney pushed Corbett to his feet and said quickly "Run away – he can't catch you" Corbett ran for a moment then turned and fought.

In the 17th Choynski landed several smashing punches and Corbett reeled around the ring. Choynski looked All the winner then but only for a moment.

In the 22nd his seconds wanted to throw up the sponge but Choynski refused to be rescued and although he was blinded fought along as best he could.

He was cut to ribbons when he finally dropped In the 27th. Patsy Hogan the referee counted , Choynski struggled to his feet but the referee mercifully declared him counted out.

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San Francisco's Fighting Jew

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THE JEWS OF SAN FRANCISCO from the days of the gold rush to the turn of the century included many who were to be regarded as illustrious and no small number of eccentrics. Among the illustrious was the California supreme court justice, Solomon Heydenfeldt; the grain king, Isaac Friedlander; the industrialist, Levi Strauss; and the banker, Isaias W. Hellman. The eccentrics would certainly include Michael Reese, the penny-pinching philanthropist; Emperor Joshua Abraham Norton, the kindest king who never reigned; Elias Abraham Rosenberg, sometime astrologer and advisor to King Kalakaua of Hawaii; and Isador Nathan Choynski, raconteur, antiquarian bookman, publisher, and acid-pen journalist of his own Public Opinion, the muck-raking gadfly of San Francisco life. I.N. Choynski had a son called Joe. Joe was illustrious in an unusual field. That he succeeded in this field and was a Jew made many think of him as an eccentric. A look into Nat Fleischer's boxing record book shows:

Joe Choynski. Born, San Francisco, Cal., November 8, 1868. Nationality, Jewish- American. Height, 5 feet, 10 1/2 inches. Weight, 168 pounds. Began boxing as amateur in 1884. Won Pacific Coast Championship in 1887. Turned Professional in 1888.1

Boxing historian Robert A. Haldane observed that Joe Choynski was called "the greatest Jewish heavyweight of all times." Haldane supported this statement by virtue of the "fact that six of his opponents have been recognized as World's Champions: John L. Sullivan, Jim Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jim Jeffries, Marvin Hart, and Jack Johnson."² W. J. Doherty, the one-time middleweight champion of Africa and heavyweight champion of Australia, wrote that Joe Choynski was entitled to a place among the greatest pugilists of all time.

Fitzsimmons could not heat him; James J. Corbett failed to do it after forty rounds of battling. Even Jim Jeffries, the unbeatable, had to be satisfied with a drawn decision after being in the ring twenty rounds with Choynski. And in 1901 that rising young Negro, Jack Johnson, even then a boxer of wondrous cleverness, encountered the middle-aged Choynski and was beaten.³

The comment of Jack Johnson's biographer that "Joe Choynski [was] known an earlier age as the best heavyweight who never won the title" should perhaps stand in this age as well.⁴

It is a commonplace of popular Jewish history to assert that like the Greeks and Romans, the Jews were interested in a healthy mind, but unlike the Hellenes and their followers the Jews were not greatly concerned with the body. The Bible and the voluminous Rabbinic literature, however, are replete with evidence of a more than passing interest in physical development and athletic competition. During the Hellenistic period a gymnasium of the Greek type was established near the Temple site in Jerusalem. This activity and Jewish participation in "Olympic" events was viewed with horror by those Jews who saw the cult of the body as evidence of collaboration with the occupiers of Israel. In addition, time spent as participant or spectator was time withdrawn from study, and it was study which represented the emerging ideal of Jewish life. Hence, in the classical period and in the middle ages, Jewish athletic activity tended to be private and noncompetitive; exercise was recommended by various authorities including Maimonides for the maintenance of health."⁵

It was in the latter half of the eighteenth century that the Jew began to emerge as an athlete in the modern sense, and it was in the field of boxing that Jews were to achieve major recognition. This happened first in England and, from the end of the nineteenth century, in the United States. It was in England that Daniel Mendoza, the father of scientific boxing, achieved the championship in 1792. Although he lost his title to "Gentleman Jack" Jackson in 1795, Mendoza continued to fight for another decade and finally gave up the ring when at age fifty--seven, he failed in an attempt at a comeback! The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia lists the major Jewish pugilists who followed Mendoza, such as "Dutch Sam" Elias and Israel Belasco, and then offers the following comment:

[Joe] Choynski, with the exception of Mendoza, was the greatest of Jewish heavyweights even though he never won the heavyweight championship. Choynski started to fight in 1884,

when John L. Sullivan was champion, and continued in the ring until 1904, when he hung up his gloves with a record of fifty victories against fifteen defeats.⁶

The English Jewish boxer came out of a social milieu colored by flagrant anti-Semitism, and some Jews countered this hostility blow for blow in street fighting. The social climate of England allowed a Jew to defend himself and respected the Jew who could do so successfully. A handful of Jews went from street fighting to the ring, achieving not only respect but upward economic mobility. The willingness of the Jew to fight, coupled with his skill . . . must be accorded a measure of credit for enabling the Jew to establish himself as a member of the English community.”⁷ If the image of the Jew as fighter was to change the British stereotype of him, all the more did it change the self-image of English Jewry. In 1812 Pierce Egan, an English boxing writer, said: “The name of Mendoza has been resounded from one part of the kingdom to another . . . though not 'the Jew that Shakespeare drew' . . . [he] interested the Christian . . . in spite of his prejudices....”⁸

In America, the quest for ethnic viability and economic mobility also lead to the ring. In San Francisco in the 1880's rivalry was not unknown between boys of Irish and Jewish descent. One of those boys was Jim Corbett, another was Joe Choynski. Both had brothers who worked at city hall, each of whom claimed that his brother was the better fighter. That was enough to start a feud between Irish Jim and Jewish Joe.⁹ The feud led to a series of fights beginning in the fall of 1884, of which more later. Also on Joe's side was his father, the San Francisco correspondent for the leading national Jewish newspaper (the American Israelite of Cincinnati), who described his sons as “four great, big, stalwarts, who are Turn Verein fellows, and who are, I think, able to knock Sullivan out . . . in a single round.”¹⁰ In 1887, Isador N. Choynski wrote about Joe's fight with another Irish lad:

We are coming father Abraham! The boys of the Jewish persuasion are getting heavy on their muscle. Many of them are training to knock out J. L., and it may come to pass. It is almost an everyday occurrence to read in our papers that a disciple of Mendoza... has knocked out the best of sluggers, who point with pride to their ancestors. . . . This week a youngster, who calls himself J. B. Choynski, nineteen years old, native of this city, weighing a hundred and sixty pounds, fought for the championship and gold medal with one named [Joe] Connelly, and the lad with the Polish name knocked the well-knitted Irish lad of much experience, out in three rounds, and carried off the medal and the applause triumphantly. The Choynski is a candy-maker,¹¹ works every and does not go into training; but has bones like unto Tubal Cain. I knew that boy's grandfather quite well - he is dead several years, but if the pious, learned grandfather could lift his head from the grave and look upon the arena where mostly the scum of society congregate, and behold his grandson slugging and sparring and fighting and dodging... he would hang his head and exclaim. . . What is this horrible show for?¹²

A few months later, Joe's journalist father reminded his readers that he had written about “a Jew-boy, a full fledged slugger whose name is Joe Boe Choynski, who won the champion belt and gold medal. . . for this coast.” The readers were informed that the not-yet nineteen-year-old had fought four heavyweight amateur bouts in four months and that he had to defend his title at the Golden Gate Athletic Club with an old opponent.

The young Jew got away with blacksmith [William] Keneally, who is thirty-two years of age, and has been a boxer of many years' standing. The Choynski boy fairly wiped the floor with the Irish gentleman, and finished him in four hard contested rounds. The Jews, who take little stock in slugging, are glad that there is one Maccabee among them, and that the Irish will no longer boast that there is not a Jew who can stand up to the racket and receive punishment according to the rules of Queensberry Joe Boe is marching about town. . . with his diamond badge pinned to the lapel of his vest. . .13

San Francisco was not unique in that its multi-ethnic neighborhoods produced rivalries, strengthened by prejudice, which gave rise to street fighters whose success resulted in their being invited to appear at organized amateur bouts. In San Francisco, as in London of the eighteenth century, Jews were free to enjoy what was somewhat facetiously called "muscular Judaism." In 1904, a Chicago Jewish newspaper delighted in the fact that a Berlin Jewish merchant named Jacobson had given a sound thrashing to a noble anti-Semite of that city. The editorial writer stressed the name Jacobson, finding it "quite as worthy of remembrance as that of Joe Choynski in the Jewish Encyclopedia." The analogy was made between the dangerous anti-Semitism of Berlin and the neighborhood conflicts of San Francisco. The editorial attributed some of Choynski's "prowess as a pugilist" to "Jew-baiting."

He had been teased and snubbed by his non-Jewish schoolmates until his pride resented it with good, hard fistic impressions upon his tormentors' physiognomies. . . . While, however, we may refer to these facts with undisguised satisfaction, we do not mean to propose pugilism as the most desirable means of subduing anti-Semitism. That were certainly a barbarous if not dangerous demonstration of homeopathy. But we do mean to imply that a little more serious consideration of. . . "Muscular Judaism," may often be a most effective antidote.14

Joe Choynski turned professional in 1888. On November 14 of that year a fight was arranged with George Bush at the Golden Gate Athletic Club on Stevenson Street, San Francisco. Bush was taller and "looked flabby, while Choynski's muscles stood out in bold relief." Joe floored Bush in the first round, and in the second round, "it was patent that Bush was a defeated man." The fight ebbed with a knockout near the end of that round.15

Another early professional bout, against Frank Glover of Chicago, was held at the California Athletic Club. A purse of \$1,000 was to go to the winner and \$250 to the loser. Joe trained at Dieves' Gym on San Leandro Road and weighed in at 163 pounds. His opponent was seven pounds heavier. The fight went fourteen rounds, with Glover knocked out after going down for the fifth time in succession. The account of the fight was headlined: "A game fight made by the Chicago stockyards man, but the candy-puller's reach was too long."16 A St. Louis Jewish newspaper noted that "brave Joe" won the purse "together with applause." The account continued:

I am sure. . . his parents felt bad at seeing him enter the ring, yet, when Joe is able to make a mille . . . at an honest and manly sport, they will be reconciled to the idea. Joe has. . . acted very nobly toward his parents and his aged grandmother in Germany.17

A decade later, when Choynski fought Dick Moore in St. Louis and knocked him out in

three rounds, the same Jewish newspaper in that city regarded it as “a questionable honor, indeed, which ‘religious’ Judaism will never claim, leaving that at the disposal of the radicals and the Zionists.”¹⁸

One of the most celebrated boxing rivalries of all time, that between Choynski and Corbett, which began with the bantering of their respective brothers at San Francisco’s City Hall, was to result in five bouts of which the latter three were professional. In his autobiography, James J. Corbett recalled his first two fights with Choynski. At their first meeting Jim Corbett viewed his opponent and saw “a magnificent looking fellow with a blonde head and great strength.” The fight was brief: “We had only been fighting for a minute or two when I knocked him cold,” Corbett said.¹⁹

It might well have been that Choynski and Corbett would never have traded punches again, but their brothers, Herbert Choynski and Frank Corbett, kept on feuding. Frank taunted Herbert over Joe’s defeat and Herbert replied: “Even if Jim did lick him with the gloves, Joe can knock the ‘daylights’ out of him with bare fists.”²⁰ A secret fight was arranged for a Sunday afternoon in a stone quarry just outside of San Francisco. Corbett’s father heard of it and objected because he feared it would endanger his son’s job at the Nevada Bank. Jim remembered telling his father: “If you feel that way. . . I’ll go up to Choynski’s house like a man and tell him I can’t.” The Irish lad went to the Choynski household on Golden Gate Avenue and there he met a third Choynski brother, “Chauncey.” When Jim asked to see Joe, “Chauncey” replied: “You wait until this afternoon, you’ll see him then, all right. He’ll knock you all over the lot.”²²

Young Corbett became angered, forgot his father’s admonition, and dared Joe to come out. The challenge accepted, the fight took place on the sand hills outside of the city, and, while Corbett learned quickly that Choynski had improved through boxing lessons taken at the Golden Gate Club, Choynski finally lost. Corbett, still angry, took on one of Joe’s brothers and had “the satisfaction of putting [him] out for the count.” When Jim’s father heard about the fight his concern vanished. He said: “You licked the two of them - the two Choynski boys? Aah! To hell with the bank!”²³

Years later, after Corbett had been the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, he praised the man with whom he had had more contests than with anyone else.

Joe Choynski, in my estimation, [was] one of the gamest and best fighters that ever lived, though a little bit too light for the heavyweight class. He was really as good as most champions I have seen, and this statement covers a period of nearly fifty years.²⁴

All of the three professional Corbett-Choynski fights occurred within a period of a month-and-a-half, during the summer of 1889. They took place at Fairfax in Marin County, near Benicia in Solano County, and in San Francisco. The first bout, at Fairfax, was stopped after the fourth round by the local sheriff. The location of the fight had been kept secret, since it was illegal to stage fights to the finish outside of licensed clubs. Rumors of this fight were widely circulated, the press having built it up into a grudge match. It was known that the participants had chosen Decoration Day (May 30) as the time, a twenty-four-foot ring as the setting, a fight to the finish as the condition, and that considerable gambling money had been wagered. Despite all

precautions to insure secrecy, Sheriff Healey had no trouble locating the event.²⁵ It appears that the sheriff was embarrassed by finding that the bout was still on when he arrived.

“Boys,” he said, “I thought the fight would be over by this time. I’m sorry to stop it. and if you will go over into the next county I’ll sit in; but I have to stop it now that I’m here.”²⁶

As far as it went, it was a good fight. As a well-known sports writer remembered it, the interrupted battle was “fiercely contested,” but the fighters had not “decided anything, so about a week later the two fought again.”²⁷ It was generally held that Corbett looked the stronger and the odds were raised against Choynski for the next fight, which was really the continuation of the four rounds at Fairfax.

When the fight was continued, effort was again made to avoid the possibility of police interference. The press noted that “the sporting fraternity was greatly excited . . . that Corbett and Choynski would finish their battle. . . .” It was falsely rumored that the fight would be held on the Farallones or Goat Islands, so that no “sheriff will be allowed an opportunity to spoil the fun.”²⁸ Actually, the fight took place on a long grain barge anchored in the bay close to Benicia. The principals and the fans reached the barge by means of the tug, Sea Queen. There were about two hundred spectators, some of whom were on the barge and others who watched from adjacent vessels. People began to gather at 4:30 A.M. on June 5, 1889. Before the fight began

the referee [Patsy Hogan] announced that when the men clinched he would order them to break away and step back without striking, and if they did not do so he would call it a foul. This innovation. . . led to a most scientific stand-up fight....²⁹

Corbett wrote that he didn’t anticipate that the fight on the barge was to be “the very toughest battle that I had ever fought or was to fight,” and that he received more punishment than in all the “other battles put together” that made up his career.³⁰ It was a grueling, savage, and bloody piece of ring warfare. In an interview with boxing historian Nat Fleisher, Corbett said, “Before the battle was half over, some of the spectators were so sickened by the sight of the red carnage, that even hard-boiled ring fans looked away.. .”³¹

At what proved to be the middle of the fight which ended in the twenty-seventh round, Corbett described himself as being so exhausted and having absorbed so much punishment, that he and his brother thought that he was well on the way to defeat.” Frank Corbett turned away from the ring and saw his brother Harry leaning over a gunwale crying into the water and sobbing, "I can’t see Jim licked.”³²

Nat Fleisher recorded that Joe Choynski was really stronger physically and was able to hit harder, but that Corbett had the advantage of height and weight. It was in the twenty-seventh round that Corbett, who was flailing wildly, let go a desperate left hook which crashed squarely on Choynski’s jaw. Joe fell for the count. Corbett later told Fleisher that he was almost out on his feet at the time and was so dazed that he had to ask his second, Billy Delaney, what had happened. Delaney told Jim that he had knocked out Joe, which was how Corbett found out that he had won! Years later in an interview, Delaney said that this fight was unequalled for cleverness, endurance, and the gameness displayed.³³

The two exhausted gladiators were carried to a tug which was to return them to San Francisco. Jim Corbett wrote in his autobiography that “as soon as I could get on my feet, I went to Choynski’s cabin and shook his hand, turning the old feud into a friendship which has lasted ever since.” A manifestation of that friendship came soon.

The following month, on July 15, 1889, Choynski and Corbett met in the ring for the fifth and last time. It was, however, the first time they had met without a grudge. The event was a four-round exhibition, billed as a benefit for Choynski. It was held at the Mechanics’ Pavilion, before a crowd of 2,100 spectators, “including many ladies with their escorts.” The social character of the evening was indicated by the presence of the Golden Gate Band, which “furnished an excellent programme of music.” At the end of “four friendly rounds, which were loudly applauded,” referee Patsy Hogan declared Corbett the winner of the event and Choynski the recipient of the benefit purse.³⁴ Despite their new-found friendship, once Corbett became the world heavyweight champion in 1892, he failed to give Choynski an opportunity to contest him for the title.

In 1890 and 1891, Joe Choynski had a number of bouts on the West Coast and then fought five times in Australia, at Sydney and Melbourne. In Australia, he only lost to Joe Goddard, the Australian heavyweight champion. Commenting on the Goddard-Choynski contests (they fought twice), the one-time Australian champion, W.J. Doherty, said:

One punch of Choynski’s stands out in my memory. . . it was a masterpiece delivered by a master. . . straight as a sword-thrust, perfectly timed, perfectly placed, with all the speed and power and weight behind it that a trained and skilled athlete could command. And just as though he had been struck by lightning, Joe Goddard crashed to the boards and lay still. . . . by all the rules and traditions . . . such a punch should have kept the strongest man down and out for keeps.

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At the end of 1891, Choynski sparred with John L. Sullivan, world heavyweight champion, in a three-round exhibition in San Francisco. Only three days previously, Joe had KO’ed Bill Woods of Denver in a thirty-four rounder!

The year 1892 was Choynski’s most active in the ring. He fought across the United States and in England, winning all twelve of his fights, eight of them by knockouts.

In the summer of 1894, Choynski met Bob Fitzsimmons in Boston, for a five-round Bunker Hill Day exhibition. Joe floored Fitzsimmons and took the popular decision, though it was a no-decision fight. It will be remembered that three years later, Fitzsimmons won the championship by defeating Corbett at Carson City, Nevada.

In 1897, when Fitzsimmons won the crown, Choynski met another future champion, Jim Jeffries, in San Francisco. Joe weighed in at 167 pounds, Jeffries at 219. Jeffries described the fight later.

Choynski rushed out and we went at it hammer and tongs, with the crowd going wild. He fought so fast he was all over me. . . . He convinced me that he was not only the cleverest boxer I had ever seen but also a terrific hitter. He fought so fast I could not use what skill I had to best

advantage, and was taking a wonderful boxing lesson every minute. . . . he hit me so hard he broke my nose and wedged my lip between my teeth. He drove my head so far back I thought my neck stretched a foot. . . .During the remainder of the fight I knocked Choynski down three times but at the end of the battle [Referee] Graney called it a draw. . . . I had no regrets. I had taken a boxing lesson from a master and an artist....³⁶

In the next several years, Choynski met many able opponents and knocked out or decisioned most of them. Then, Choynski was contacted for a fight with the still-unknown Jack Johnson on February 25, 1901, at Galveston, Texas.

Galveston was Johnson's home town. Local promoters wanted a major adversary for him so that he might demonstrate the talent that would lead him to be considered a major contender. Sports historian Denzil Batchelor, who wrote the life story of Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion of the world, recorded how important the Choynski fight was for the man who would hold the title from 1910 when he defeated Jim Jeffries, until 1915, when he lost it to Jess Willard.

[Jack Johnson] the coming man was meeting a fighter with an historic reputation.... Moreover, Choynski was not by any means on the slide.... The bout with Choynski in Galveston was certainly the first big chance in Johnson's life. If he won it, the way lay open to the top of the tree; if only he could persuade Jeffries or Corbett to withdraw the color bar and meet him on level terms.³⁷

Joe came with experience, and the fight showed that all of Johnson's strength and promise could not overcome it. In the third round, Choynski landed a left hook to the temple and Jack Johnson crashed to the floor. It was a knockout and was one of the few times that Johnson lost that way. In later years Johnson said that it "was the hardest punch" he had ever received in his fistic career.³⁸

As the fight came to an end, five tall Texas Rangers, wearing ten-gallon hats and holding drawn guns leaped into the ring and announced that the governor of Texas had ordered the arrest of the principals. A cheering crowd accompanied the boxers to the local jail where they spent twenty-eight days before charges were dropped. It was a big news story. "The world noticed him [Jack Johnson] for the first time. . . . In prison with Joe Choynski - that was a real achievement!"³⁹ According to some boxing experts, it was during the twenty-eight days in the Galveston lock-up, that "Choynski taught Johnson the finer points of the manly art."⁴⁰

Joe's ring career ended in 1904 after seventy-seven bouts. He won fifty times, half of those by knockouts, drew six times, and lost fourteen times; the remaining seven fights were no-decision or exhibition matches. Choynski was one of the greatest scientific fighters of all time. After he defeated Peter Maher in Chicago, On February 16, 1900, a special dispatch to San Francisco observed that he had fought the battle as he had mapped it out and emerged as the winner, without a scratch.⁴¹ Reverting to the language of the ethnic rivalry of Irish and Jew in San Francisco, G. A. Danziger, the West Coast correspondent for the Jewish Voice of St. Louis, called Choynski a scientific boxer as opposed to his Irish rivals:

“Limerick has brute force, while Jerusalem has science. Paddy loses and Joseph wins. I wish it were ever thus.”⁴² The New York Times noted that Choynski was “in no sense a killer, but a forerunner of the type of fighter who learned early the value of science over brute strength.”⁴³

Joe Choynski’s skill became legendary. It was Battling Nelson, who had been lightweight champion of the world, who told a typical story about this skill. According to Nelson,

He had a wicked habit of placing his fingers on an opponent’s breast while in the clinches of a fight as if to talk to him. With the tips of his fingers touching the other fellow’s right nipple, he would say, “Now, old fellow, you want to be good.” Then before a word could be said in reply, by the mere movement of the wrist, he would plunge the heel of his left hand into the man’s liver. When the man doubled up from the unexpected pain, Joe would whang him in the jaw and the fight would be over. I saw Choynski do this a couple of times and I began to study anatomy.⁴⁴

Although Corbett is credited with developing the left hook, he admitted that it should have been called “The Choynski.” “But I guess I was still mad at Joe, so it got called the left hook. . . the first new blow in pugilism since pugilism was young.”⁴⁵

The great chronicler of Broadway and the world of sports, Damon Runyon, wrote a column at Joe’s passing in 1943. Runyon was upset that Choynski’s death had occasioned the comment that he was “the greatest hitter for a little man that boxing had ever known.” Runyon favored Henry Armstrong for that role. Armstrong was a featherweight, while Joe was little, as heavyweights go, before there was a light heavyweight class. Nonetheless, Damon Runyon said:

I did not see Choynski fight, though on the testimony of those who did, I am willing to agree that he was good, this eye-witness testimony being the only kind I accept about the fight game.⁴⁶

Runyon may have misread an obituary article by Howard W. Smith in the San Francisco Chronicle, in which the writer said:

Old-timers claim that Joe Choynski was the sharpest hitter of all time. Not the hardest, understand, for Joe was little more than a middleweight. But he could put every ounce of his 172 pounds behind a precision punch that had been prepared through rounds of maneuvering his opponent.⁴⁷

Joe Choynski was not a brutal fighter. He achieved his knockouts by skill and science. Brutality was against his nature; science was consistent with his character and background. Mrs. Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr., daughter of Joe’s oldest brother Herbert, knew Joe as a child and remembered the family tradition as well as her own impression that he was “a soft, sweet, lovable man.” She observed that the family thought it unusual for a man with such a personality to have been a boxer.⁴⁸ The only survivor from Joe’s generation in the family, a sister-in-law, Mrs. Edwin Coe, described him fondly as a “kindly, soft-hearted, truly great personality whom everyone called a marvelous man.” She remembered his “tall, handsome slenderness and his compassionate blue eyes.”⁴⁹ He retained his handsome appearance throughout the twenty years of his boxing career and in fact, it was noted that “he never wore a bandage and, strange as it

may seem, never injured his hands.”⁵⁰ Joe once recounted to friends, “I used to stick my fists into a pickling vat, maybe for hours, just to toughen ‘em up.” The press called his hands “vinegar-hardened.”⁵¹

“Soft-spoken and scholarly,”⁵² Choynski’s accomplishments were not limited to the ring. As the San Francisco Examiner observed:

Unlike many of the bruisers of the era when two-ounce and skin tight gloves were used. . . Choynski was highly intelligent and well read in the classics, and often in his correspondence referred to some quotation to make a point.⁵³

Not only was Joe a reader and a truly literate person, he was also known as a collector of antiques who possessed some exceptionally valuable ivory.”⁵⁴ Choynski was interested in music and one of his old fight friends humorously recalled “hearing battling Joe. . . play a waterlogged piano.”⁵⁵

When in 1903 Choynski was asked the secret of his ring longevity, he said that he always lived the good life. It was important to him to retire early each night. He said that he never drank a drop of intoxicating liquor during his fistic career. He stressed that he did not chew or smoke tobacco and had not been sick an hour during his fighting years. “That’s the secret of my success.”⁵⁶ Tim McGrath, an old-time sports figure, agreed that “Joe was a teetotaler,” but he was so anxious to best the Australian Goddard, that he “consented to try ale and stout as a body builder,” to no avail.⁵⁷

Choynski would walk the extra mile for a friend, and his friends remembered him. John L. Sullivan visited San Francisco in 1891 with his play, “Honest Hearts and Willing Hands.” The production was a flop. In order to help Sullivan out of hock, Joe agreed to the exhibition fight in which he sparred with the champ.⁵⁸ Joe’s ring friendships lasted. Whenever Corbett was in Pittsburgh where Choynski lived for some years, they met to reminisce and dine together.⁵⁹ The San Francisco Examiner morgue has an unidentified clipping headlined, “Chinese Remembers Choynski in Will.” The text tells that Choynski was notified in Pittsburgh that he had been “left a legacy of \$10,000 in the will of Jim Pon, a Chinese whom the boxer befriended years ago.”

Most of the Choynski family memorabilia were lost in the San Francisco earthquake-fire of 1906. The bulk of the surviving material of this important California Jewish family is to be found in the journalistic sports reports and in the voluminous newspaper writings of Joe’s father, Isador Nathan Choynski, in such organs as the Weekly Gleaner and the Jewish Times of San Francisco, the American Israelite of Cincinnati, and his own newspaper, Public Opinion, a journal of general circulation.⁶⁰

Clearly, the Choynski household was highly literate and politically oriented. Joe’s father was one of the founders and leaders of the Hebrew Young Men’s Literary Association, established in the 1850s in San Francisco. His leadership, atypically, was a product of his intellectual brilliance, rather than the result of economic success. The highest office in the community structure of the Jewry of the western states was the presidency of District Grand Lodge No. 4, Independent Order of B’nai B’rith. Though B’nai B’rith traditionally had German Jewish leadership, and I. N.

Choynski was a Polish Jew, he held the District Grand Lodge presidency in 1874 and was re-elected for 1875.⁶¹ Joe's father also had been an editor for the *Alta California* and a reporter for the *Evening Post*; he was known in literary circles for his *Antiquarian Bookstore* and press. His brother, Joe's uncle Isaiah, was a well known writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and had been a reporter for the *Examiner* of that city.⁶²

When Lincoln first ran for the presidency, Isador Choynski stumped the state for him and was rewarded with an appointment as federal customs collector for San Francisco. His early muckraking approach to politics is indicated by a series of speeches he gave on the West Coast in the late 1850s.⁶³ His *Public Opinion* was highly political as were his columns for the ethnic press.

Joe's mother was the former Harriet Ashim, who had been a pupil in the 1850's of Rabbi Julius Eckman, of San Francisco. Her father was Jewish, her mother a convert to Judaism. At her marriage to Isador N. Choynski on March 20, 1862, Rabbi Eckman wrote in his newspaper, the *Weekly Gleaner*, that

Mrs. I. N. Choynski, is the only pupil that is connected with our religious school, from its opening in July, 1854, to this day: first as a pupil and afterwards as a faithful, untiring teacher.⁶⁴

Mrs. Choynski never quite accepted her son's role as a fighter. "Before a fight his mother became upset, behaving like a crazy woman, but the rest of the family overrode her objections."⁶⁵ Joe was sensitive to his mother's concern. After the 1889 fight with Frank Glover, Joe's brother Edwin related that Joe came home and laid the prize money on the table, a considerable sum.

Surprised, my mother excitedly asked, "Where did you get that, Joe?" "The fellow I was training won, Ma, and I'm taking care of his money." It wasn't until the next day when the papers carried stories of a young boy, who as a substitute, triumphed over a seasoned veteran, that Choynski's mother learned it was her son who was the hero of the hour.⁶⁶

The five children of Isador and Harriet Choynski, in the order of their birth, were: Herbert, a leading San Francisco attorney; Miriam, who did not marry; Joe; Morris, later a theater owner in Chicago; and Edwin, a prominent San Francisco stockbroker.⁶⁷ The Choynskis were members of Congregation *Sherith Israel*.⁶⁸

Joe's wife, Louise, was a member of a non-Jewish Cincinnati family. She had been an actress and later joined her husband in personal appearances on the stage. Joe and Louise lived at various times in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and in Cincinnati where he retired. The couple had no children. When Joe died on January 25, 1943, his wife survived him as did his brothers Morris and Edwin and his sister Miriam.⁶⁹

In later years Joe went back to school and was graduated as a chiropractor in Chicago. On a visit to San Francisco he was interviewed and described as having a successful practice in Pittsburgh, where for some years he had been physical director of the Pittsburgh Athletic Club.⁷⁰ In a 1923 visit to his home town, he made an appearance at the Olympic Club. There he put on

the gloves, working out with a young boxer, and he was a very trim figure at the age of fifty-five. When he was seventy years of age, he was still “lightning fast,” as he trained young fighters at the Athletic Club in Cincinnati.⁷² Toward the end of his life, Choynski was engaged as “a film consultant for the Hollywood version of the life story of his boyhood rival, Jim Corbett.”⁷³

Joe Choynski’s career offered the first major opportunity for the stereotype of the Jew to be extended from the world of trade to the world of sports, from storekeeper to athlete. When the image of the Jew was broadened by activities so typically American as athletics, the Jewish presence in America was further naturalized. Out of the ethnic conflicts of cosmopolitan San Francisco, Joe Choynski emerged as a symbol of how American a Jew might be, given a new frontier upon which to plant an ancient culture. Joe Choynski was a great fighter, a great Californian, and the first international sports figure to come from American Jewry. He was a champion, though he never held the title.