
Prize Fighting

by Eugene V. Debs

Unsigned article in *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*,
vol. 13, no. 8 (Aug. 1889), pg. 720.

Prize fighting as an American industry is making rapid strides, and if matters progress in the future as they have in the near past, we see no reason why the United States should not be the most advanced prize-ring nation in the world. We have an abundance of the required raw material — bone, spine, muscle, courage, staying qualities. We have young men of the various weights and of the proper build, ready to enter the ring at any price named, from \$50 to \$5,000. If a man needs newspaper notoriety, the prize-ring offers every inducement that the most exacting could demand. The wires are at his command. From the day the “forfeit” is put up, and the bully begins “training,” the press keeps him before the public. His diet, his running, walking, sleeping, bathing, his rubbings, everything is noted by the press, the great educating power of the country. The trainer comes in for a fair share of fame. The backers, stake holders, bottle holders, and referees are not overlooked.

As the time approaches for the fight, interest increases. The out-of-the-way locality where the fight is to take place excites the public mind. As the tall proceeds, the fighters grow in importance. They obscure statesmen, philanthropists, educators, explorers, warriors, and divines, and when the battle is over, then great newspapers vie with each other in describing incidents. Every “round” is described with graphic accuracy. “First blood,” “first knock down,” condition of “peepers,” “smellers,” “hash holes,” etc., are particularly noticed. “Left handers” and “right handers” are given special prominence, and thus column after column heralds to the world the incidents of a prize fight. The great public devours the literature with eagerness. It is never surfeited, and yet the same papers will deplore the civilization of the Spaniards, who delight in witnessing bull fights, and aid in raising money to send missionaries to convert savages.

Funny, isn't it?