

*October 4, 1917.*—My walk with Kinnie and Tai Tai and this afternoon posing for Woog. Raining all day. William Allen White and Allen of Kansas here in my absence; I regretted not having seen them. Went at six with Woog to the English camp at Harfleur for the boxing. Great ring erected, as though the fight were for the championship of the world, between Sullivan and Corbett, in the Y.M.C.A. "hut"—an enormous wigwam. A great electric light blazed on the elevated platform, with the ropes and the chairs at the corners, all the well-known paraphernalia, and two referees—one of them a clergyman of the Church of England, in their high seats, with their gong, their time-piece, and so on (the contests were under Army and Navy rules, which do not permit the referee to enter the ring). All around in the semi-darkness hundreds and hundreds of soldiers, a vast, enthusiastic audience, but disciplined and quiet. There were seven special contests, of four or six rounds, mostly light-weights, but there was a heavy-weight fight between Corporal Duffey of the Welsh Guards and Private Kirvin, an Australian—which the Corporal won fairly at the end of the fourth round. They were to have gone six—the Australian shouted out that he could not fight his opponent and the referee too. He was very groggy then. The referee—the parson—had been saying, from time to time: "Stop, Blue, stop boring. Box on." And once: "Stop, Blue, is your hearing affected?" "No, sir." "Stop boring. It is the last warning. Box on." In the first contest, in the second round, one man was knocked out cold. There were two other fights in which Australians appeared, and though they both won them, as I thought, and as many thought, they were declared to be draws.

The best match was between Harrison, Royal Field Artillery, a young Greek god, and Parry, an Australian—fast and pretty work. At the end Gunner Moir gave an exhibition—not so interesting, the ex-champion heavy-weight, old at forty—as the fiery fighting of the youngsters.

I was asked to present the prizes—cups and so forth, and did so.

Then the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner"—and afterwards "God Save the King."

I stopped, with Woog, to dine at the officers' mess with Colonel Kitson Clark and Colonel Manly. Then late, we drove home in the rain.

A parson refereeing a prize-fight—to say nothing of a Minister attending one! But it made me feel young again; brought back memories of those days when Dude Butler and Johnny Cannon and Johnny Eckert and I used to box. The dim wigwam, the great ring, the glare of light above it, the ropes—and Gunner Moir, his great, splendid torso elaborately tattooed, like the savage he is—the savage is in us all!—throwing off his bathrobe and boxing with memories, too evidently, of departed glories—all so familiar, the lunging, shuffling, the heavy breathing, the bruised eye, the seconds with their bottles, sponges, towels, even the acrid odour of perspiration—and I was a boy again!